

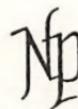
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AN ANALYSIS OF THE OUR FATHER

WHEN YOU PRAY

by

Richard Klaver, o.s.c.



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Foreword

There are many people who would like to know more about prayer. In order to improve their personal method of conversing with God, they turn to books and treatises on prayer with great avidity and eagerness, not seldom to find themselves discouraged, even frightened, at the sublime ideas and ideals proposed and the subtlety of the subject propounded. Yet prayer cannot be so intricate, nor its objective so elusive, if our Lord persuaded us to pray always and not lose heart (Luke 18:1). Nor can prayer be considered a matter of arbitrary value or free choice, when St. Paul insists: "With all prayer and supplication pray at all times in the Spirit, and therein be vigilant in all perseverance" (Eph. 6:18).

In answering the disciple who desired to be taught to pray, our Lord removed much of the mystery of prayer.

"When you pray, say:

'Father, hallowed be Thy name.
Thy kingdom come!
Give us this day our daily bread,
And forgive us our sins,
for we also forgive everyone who is
indebted to us.'

And lead us not into temptation'" (Luke 11:1-4).

If we take our Lord at His word—and there is no indication that we should do otherwise—we may well accept this to be the answer to *our* query, the solution to all *our* confusion. Here we have a simple and infallible method of prayer, fitting every mind and mood, and at

once adapted to all time and circumstances. St. Augustine does not hesitate to claim that the *Our Father* is the quintessence of all prayer, and that whatever else we say when we pray, we only repeat what is already contained in the Lord's Prayer. In fact, what should be easier than to turn within ourselves and think of God as our Father and to ask to make our prayer pleasing to Him?

While there is no dearth of competent explanations of the *Our Father*, in both its ascetical and devotional aspects, we have endeavored to emphasize in these pages the theological background of the prayer, thus indicating that the combined depth and simplicity of its several petitions makes it eminently suitable to form the true and solid foundation of all our prayer. We thought it expedient to preface this comment with a few introductory observations on prayer in general, while some concluding remarks about the *Hail Mary* presented themselves almost inevitably because of the intrinsic beauty of this prayer and its universal acclaim.

Quotations from the Old Testament follow the Douay version. New Testament texts are from the official translation of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (Copyright, 1941). A few passages, inserted in the book, could not be traced to their origin. The writer, however, is reasonably sure that they are properly quoted and credited.

R. K.

Our Lady of the Lake Seminary
Syracuse, Indiana
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Introduction

Those who have read Father Klaver's earlier book, *The Litany of Loreto*, will find that his aim and method are much the same in the present study of the Lord's Prayer, which we commonly call the "Our Father." To explore and interpret the deep and often hidden meaning of these familiar, inspired phrases, the author draws on his wide knowledge of approved theological sources as well as his experience as a teacher and director of souls. Both the necessity of prayer for all of us and the difficulty of prayer for most of us give this book a quite general appeal and a practical usefulness for clergy, Religious, and laity.

Today there is necessary emphasis on organized activity within the Church; but, for that reason, there is a very real danger of slighting the importance of personal sanctification, of individual growth in the supernatural life of grace which can be secured, maintained, promoted only by the habit of prayer. Father Klaver's book faces this problem and meets it, I think, successfully. Sound in doctrine, rich in Scriptural reference, pointed in its application to the moral and spiritual needs of the modern reader, *When You Pray* recommends itself to all who are interested in doing well the one thing most worthy of being done perfectly—communing with God. I am happy in the privilege of presenting it to what I hope will be a large and appreciative audience.

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WHEN YOU PRAY

The Essence of Prayer

P RAYER is an act of the virtue of religion. By it, we acknowledge God's omnipotence and goodness, our own indigence and dependence. While prayer emphasizes our intimate relationship and intercourse with God, it fosters a deep respect for His infinite majesty as its first objective. It is only after we have acquitted ourselves of this basic task, that we present our requests; this is prayer's secondary objective. According to this twofold end, we divide prayer into prayer of worship and petition, and the act proper is conceived as a conscious effort of man to perform the vital functions which define his essential relations with God.

Before all else, our homage of God means adoration. It comprises the acknowledgment of His supreme dominion and of our correlated and immediate dependence, both of which are paramount in every act of worship. The whole of creation adores God in its own measure. In this manner it is written: "The heavens show forth the glory of God, and the firmament declares the work of His hands" (Ps. 18:1). Inanimate nature, however, lacks both an intellect to understand, and a heart to love. Says Bossuet:

It cannot see, but it reveals itself; it cannot adore, but it brings us to our knees, loath to have us ignore the God it cannot apprehend itself. Thus man, a breath divine within a body of clay, possessed of reason and intelligence and capable of knowing God through his natural powers as well as through the agency of creation, is urged by his own self and by all creatures to bow before God in humble adoration. For this reason is man himself a microcosm, placed in this world, that contemplating the universe and, as it were, gathering it into himself, he may refer himself and all things to God, so much so, that man is made to contemplate the visible things of this creation only in order that he may adore the invisible God, who brought them out of nothing by the omnipotence of His power. Thus we are instinctively drawn to revere what is perfect, to depend on what is supreme, to cling to what is infinitely good.¹

Adoration is followed by thanksgiving. Holy Scripture is replete with invitations to offer thanks for the greatness of God's glory and the manifold gifts which we received from His bounty. In this respect St. Paul remarks: "In all things give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus" (I Thess. 5:18). The Church's liturgy, following this lead constantly, prays in the Preface of the Mass: "Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. It is truly meet and just, right and salutary, to offer thanks to Thee, O Father Almighty and Eternal God, forever and everywhere, through Christ our Lord."

In our present state of fallen nature a third duty forces itself upon us, that of expiation and reparation. We have

¹ *Oeuvres oratoires* (Paris, 1890), "Sermon on the Worship of God."

too often provoked God's majesty, even using His gifts to offend Him. Our effort to offer satisfaction remains pitiful enough. By nature our every human act is finite, yet the offense maligning God's majesty was infinite. If it were not for our Lord, who takes our obligation to atone upon Himself, we would indeed be helpless. St. John, however, reassures us, saying, "If anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the just; and He is a propitiation for our sins, not for ours only but also for those of the whole world" (I John 2:1).

Prayer of petition, finally, implores God's boundless mercy and benevolence. Holy Scripture first speaks of this form of prayer in reference to Enos, the son of Seth, who "began to call upon the name of the Lord" (Gen. 4:26). The Fathers mention it as an elevation of the mind, an act of communing and conversing with God with the view of obtaining favors. Prayer gives definite form to our honest desires and disposes us to partake of God's largess in keeping with His wisdom and eternal designs. While it presupposes faith in God and trust in His goodness, it submits without restriction to His infallible judgment. As such, it does not so much aim to change God's intent in our respect as to change our own attitude toward God's plans and directives, bringing our desires in harmony with the ineffable pattern of divine providence.

It cannot be said that God is ignorant of our necessities or sentiments. On the other hand, it must not be implied that God, being aware of all that is necessary or useful in our regard, need not be asked. St. Thomas says that out of pure liberality God does bestow innumerable gifts without being asked. But there are some which He will grant

only at our request, and this for our own good. If we would not feel the current need of turning to Him in our necessities, we would be likely to forget Him altogether.² In this respect it has been truly said that we pray, not only that God may remember us, but also, and most urgently, that we may remember Him. God invites us to ask favors with great confidence and increasing trust, and He promises to hear us. But that He may hear us infallibly, our Lord advises us to ask in His name. The reason is obvious. The value of Christ's merits are imparted to His members, and the Father cannot refuse anything to His Son, who is heard for His reverence (Heb. 5:7).

The expression of our desires need not be external or vocal. To allude to them internally or mentally is sufficient. This suggests a division of prayer into mental and vocal, according to form. The latter may again be private or public, according to the manner in which it is offered. Of the two, social prayer is the more effective, as said our Lord: "If two of you shall agree on earth about anything at all for which they ask, it shall be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together for My sake, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:19–20). If this holds true of two or three, how much stronger will be its imploring power when a multitude comes together to pray to God in solemn fashion. St. Thomas states that such prayer is irresistible before God, for "the prayers of the many cannot go unheeded, when they unite in one."³ Since the Church cannot gather her children each day and at all places, while God is

² *Summa Theologica*, IIa IIae, q. 83, a. 2, ad 3.

³ *Commentary on St. Matt.*, chap. XVIII.

worthy of praise without intermission, she commits to her priests and religious the discharge of this grand and continual duty, and stamps it the official prayer of the Church. When we speak of vocal prayer, it must be remembered that the latter loses most, if not all of its value, unless it be mental to a marked degree. For in a general sense, prayer is an application of the mind to divine things in a speculative effort to acquire greater knowledge of God with the design of translating such knowledge into a more active union with God by means of internal and external works. For this reason it seems expedient to preface our present discussion with a short review of mental prayer.

Mental prayer is a silent intercourse of the soul with God. It takes place wholly within. Thus every interior act of the mind or of the heart which is directed to God could be called mental prayer. By insisting on the worship of God in spirit and in truth (John 4:24); by frequently spending whole nights in prayer; by retiring into the solitude in order to commune with His heavenly Father, our Lord prepared the way for those saintly souls who, through all ages to come, would withdraw into the inner sanctuary of their hearts, there to meet their God in silent prayer. Mental prayer is mentioned in various places of Holy Scripture. "If I have remembered Thee upon my bed, I will meditate on Thee in the morning: because Thou hast been my helper. And I will rejoice under the covert of Thy wings: my soul has stuck close to Thee: Thy right hand has received me" (Ps. 62:7-8). And again: "Blessed is the man that shall continue in wisdom, and that shall meditate in His justice, and in his mind shall think of the all seeing eye of God. He that considers

her ways in his heart, and has understanding in her secrets, who goes after her as one that traces, and stays in her ways: he who looks in at her window, and hearkens at her door: he that lodges near her house, and fastening a pin in her walls shall set up his tent nigh unto her, where good things shall rest in his lodgings for ever . . . he shall be protected under the covering from the heat, and shall rest in her glory" (*Eccl. 14:22-27*).

Several of the Fathers treated on meditation or mental prayer in an elementary manner, as did St. Cyprian, St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, Cassian, St. Leo, St. Jerome, St. Basil, St. Chrysostom, St. Bernard. The School of St. Victor placed emphasis on meditation in order to arrive at contemplation proper;⁴ St. Thomas strongly recommends it as a means of setting the will in motion in order to attain to a prompt and reasonable service of God.⁵ The writings of the Fathers themselves are in large measure the fruit of devout meditation on the great mysteries of religion. With all that, no trace of meditation as a methodical prayer can be found before the fifteenth century. Prior to that time regulations in regard to meditation were lacking, even in abbeys and monasteries. Common prayer, usually the recitation of the Office, was prescribed in practically every monastic rule. But mental prayer was more or less committed to private initiative. In the lives of the medieval monks we read how they prolonged prayer at the end of nocturnal chant by some precious moments of mental prayer, during which time of profound recollection and

⁴ See Hugh of St. Victor, *De modo dicendi et meditandi*. See also: Migne, *PL*, CLXXVI, 877-80, 993-98.

⁵ *Summa Theologica*, IIa IIae, q. 82, a. 3.

in a heart-to-heart conversation with God they received the greatest lights, which hours of intense study had failed to produce. By way of exception, the Carthusian *Consuetudines* assigned a set time for mental prayer before the middle of the twelfth century. Early in the sixteenth century, the Dominican Chapter of Milan prescribed mental prayer for half an hour, both morning and evening. Franciscan prescriptions for methodical mental prayer date from about the middle of the same century. The Carmelites were not bound by specific regulations until St. Teresa introduced them. Henceforth, a daily period of two hours was set aside for this exercise. In 1491, Jean Mombeur of Brussels, Abbot of the Augustinian Monastery of Livry, published a series of subjects or points for meditation.⁶ But it was left to St. Ignatius, in his *Spiritual Exercises*,⁷ to reduce meditation to a definite system which, however, was not introduced into the Society as a point of rule until thirty years after its foundation. As a matter of record, St. Ignatius gave several methods of meditation, at once precise and varied. In his principal procedure, due prominence is given to the exercise of the three faculties of memory, understanding, and will, to feed the mind with wholesome thoughts and reflections, and bring about sincere affections and resolutions. Inasmuch as emphasis was placed on some of these acts in preference to others, several schools of thought developed in the course of time, each one giving detailed plans and directions to attain a specific end. In regard to these several methods, all highly psycho-

⁶ *Catholic Encyclopedia*, XII, 348.

⁷ *Exercitia Spiritualia* (Madrid, 1919). See also Adolphe Tanquerey, S.S., *The Spiritual Life* (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1945), pp. 332, 468.

logical and practical, Father Poulain remarks: "Beginners must be taught these rules, but once they have been sufficiently schooled in them so that they possess their spirit and their elements, they need but follow the broad lines of the plan and, without ceasing to be active, gradually give greater heed to the movements of the Holy Spirit."⁸

Since the primary objective of meditation is to form convictions regarding God's service and to fortify the will in respect to making appropriate resolutions, we readily see that, when the former grow stronger, less time is required to renew the latter. Meditations then become less self-centered. Thoughts group more explicitly around God. Affections are multiplied and prolonged, and a wider scope is allowed to the inspirations of grace. We are now entering upon a new form of meditation, which theologians call affective prayer. Prayer has an urgent and constant tendency to simplify itself. To be genuine, it must be completely spontaneous and intimate. Affective prayer brings one to an ever greater and more abiding union with God, since tasting God in prayer is a far better way to arrive at divine knowledge than is the most profound intellectual research. Says St. Bonaventure: "In human sciences, knowledge excites love. In the science of the saints, love produces knowledge."⁹ The direct result of this form of prayer is a greater conformity to God's holy will, a deeper desire to procure God's glory, a love of silence and recollection, an irresistible longing to withdraw from the distractions of the world. A process of transition from discursive to affective prayer is observed in the life

⁸ *Etudes* (1898), p. 782, n. 2.

⁹ *Opera Omnia* (1881), VIII.

of almost any saint, of nearly every Christian who practices mental prayer as a means of sanctification. In an unqualified statement, St. Teresa proclaims that mental prayer is very much a matter of being on terms of friendship with God, frequently conversing in secret with Him who loves us. It is a condition rather than an act which wells from the heart and finds its fulfillment in love, since true love is both the object and the end of prayer.

A further simplification of prayer is mentioned by Bossuet. The celebrated bishop calls it the prayer of simplicity. This prayer is content with almost a thought, a simple memory, a mere glance. These are his words:

One must become accustomed to nourish the soul with a simple loving gaze on God and on Jesus Christ our Lord. To attain this result, one must gently free the soul from reasonings, all discourse, even from the multitude of affections, in order to keep it simple, respectful, and attentive, and thus have it draw closer and closer to God, its first principle and last end. Grace solicits interiorly those who would become perfect to simplify themselves even in their prayer, that they may become capable of enjoying the one thing necessary, namely eternal union. Meditation is excellent in its proper place, and highly profitable at the outset of the spiritual life. But one must not linger there since the soul, by its fidelity to mortification and recollection, ordinarily becomes the recipient of a purer and more intimate form of prayer, which may be called the prayer of simplicity. This consists in a simple interior view, a loving thought on some divine subject, be it God Himself, or some of His mysteries, or any Christian truth. The soul puts aside reasoning and employs a gentle contemplation which keeps it at peace, atten-

tive and docile to the divine operations and impressions which the Holy Spirit communicates. Its labor is sweet, yet very little. But it is exceedingly fruitful, since the soul approaches nearer to the source of all light, grace, and virtue, of all which gifts it receives a proportionate share.¹⁰

A pattern of this process was evident in the life of St. Therese, the Little Flower, at a very early age. When only nine years old, Therese inquired from one of her teachers, Sister Henriette, how nuns go about making their prayer. Intending to make her answer fit the occasion, the nun told her that in prayer "you just act as when you come home in the afternoon to your father, whom you have not seen since morning. You tell him all the things that have happened to you in the meantime, your joys and your sorrows. I do the same with the good God, who is my Father. In spirit I come close to Him, I adore Him, making myself little as you, I speak to Him. In a word, it is with my heart that I make prayer." It happened probably at this period of her life that the little Saint described her own method of prayer, or lack of it. "Very often," Therese says, "I hide myself in a little space in my room, where I can easily shut myself in with my bed-curtains, and there I think." Being asked what she thought about, she answered: "I think of the good God, of the swiftness of life, of eternity. In a word: I think." It seems that Therese deliberately passed by the easy manner of praying, suggested by Sister Henriette, in favor of this simplified form of meditation. Rather than placing herself in the presence of God to tell Him of her life and its details, the things

¹⁰ *Manière courte et facile pour faire l' oraison en foi* (Paris, 1908).

that concerned herself, she thought of God, the transiency of joys and sorrows, and the goal of her life: eternity with God.¹¹

Enlarging on this point, Bossuet explains that true simplicity in prayer makes a person forget oneself. It lives in continual death and complete detachment, and demands a high degree of mental discipline. Passing over the creature, ever forgetting one's own concern, it approaches God with perfect abandon. "This grace of simplicity is not obtained by speculation, but by a great purity of heart and true mortification and self-contempt. Whoever flees suffering, humiliation, and death to self will never enter it. This also explains why so few advance to it, because hardly anyone wishes to give up self. Yet, unless we do, we experience great loss and deprive ourselves of incomprehensible good."¹² Many souls aspire after greater union with God, but few are willing to pay the price. Still, if there is to be any depth to our prayer, we must learn to live the life of the spirit rather than of the flesh. This is remarkably in accordance with the words of the author of the *Imitation*, who says:

What is more free than he who desires nothing on earth? Therefore a man ought to transcend everything created, to forsake himself perfectly. And this is the reason why there are found so few contemplative persons because there are few that know how to sequester entirely from perishable creatures. For this a great grace is required, such as may elevate the soul raising her up above herself. And unless a man

¹¹ L'Abbé Combes, *The Spirituality of St. Thérèse* (New York: P. J. Kenedy and Sons, 1953), p. 192.

¹² Bossuet, *loc. cit.*

be elevated in spirit, freed from attachment to all creatures, and wholly united to God, whatever he knows, and whatever he has, is of no great importance.¹³

All this demands a marked degree of generosity. But generosity itself is the fruit of sincere prayer. God is willing to help and, whenever He finds a generous spirit, He inspires the soul to great effort in the essential work of self-denial to remove by means of ordinary grace the obstacles which hold it fettered to earth. After this, God may take over completely and speed the soul along the essential road of proper divine guidance to an ever-increasing union. The price one has to pay is small, compared to the immense benefit derived from this greater union with the divine Spirit. For sanctity is largely a development of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, which were ours from the beginning, and will not remain dormant when the soul decides to cooperate with God's essential graces.

Along with these fundamental benefits, we find that this form of prayer gives one's life a new unity of purpose. It is the usual means of simplifying one's entire spirituality, which will gradually develop into one superseding ruling thought, that of love of God. For such souls, the best resolution to make during the course of each meditation is to resolve to live habitually in the presence of God, to refuse God nothing, and to do all things out of love for Him. However vague these resolutions may seem to those who do not practice this kind of prayer, they are very definite to the intuitive soul who has completely sur-

¹³ Thomas à Kempis, *Of the Imitation of Christ* (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1952), pp. 146-47.

rendered to the Holy Spirit abiding within, for the same Spirit will give him a practical turn during the day by His own inevitable inspirations. In this sense, prayer has been called a loving remembrance of God. When Abbé Dufour asked the Curé of Ars for advice on mental prayer, he received this answer: "I no longer have time for formal meditation, but from the first moment of the day I endeavor to unite myself with Jesus Christ, and then I do whatever needs to be done with this union in mind."¹⁴ It is thus that our inner life becomes a continual prayer, a silent prayer, with the soul lying prostrate at God's feet in speechless adoration.

After all is said, prayer is very much a private undertaking and a personal experience, which does not allow of too many restrictions, rules, and regulations. Anyone who gives himself to God, essentially determines to remain His prisoner. Henceforth his inner life is truly God's own, and no one but God can undertake its proper guidance. To whatever height of prayer God wishes to lead us, we shall be forever grateful and not obstruct the divine operation. For God reveals Himself within the soul with infinite love and a great desire of union; and it is from this fullness of love that the interior man goes forth to his outward activity, ever returning to the same divine Center and the Source of all grace, who has taken up a lasting abode in the sanctuary of his heart.

¹⁴ Alfred Monnin, *Life of the Curé of Ars* (St. Louis: Herder Book Co., 1924).

II

Prayer as Christ Taught Us

THE interior life finds its foundation in the sacrament of baptism, which brought us sanctifying grace and the right to all actual graces necessary to unfold the supernatural life of the soul. In the development of this supernatural life the sacraments take first place and are our prime means of sanctification. As a matter of fact, the flow of grace, which came to man through the instrumentality of our Lord's physical presence while He was on earth, is continued through the ages, passing from the divinity of Christ, through His humanity, into the sacraments. In this respect Father Scheeben remarks:

As the corporal nature assumed by the Son of God is the necessary condition of His unity with the race, and this unity in turn is the foundation of the highest elevation of the race and hence of its participation in the supernatural, mysterious power of its head, so it was most fitting that the mysterious power of grace possessed by the Son of God should come to the race through the vehicle of His bodily humanity. Thus the sublime union of God and His power of supernatural grace with visible, material nature is brought

about through the sacramental character of the God-man. For His flesh houses the fullness of the God-head, and becomes a life-giving flesh, from which supernatural life flows into us.¹

There is great theological truth as well as piety in the old maxim, quoted by St. John Chrysostom, "From the side of Christ dying on the cross flower the sacraments by which the Church was saved."²

But grace does not come to us exclusively by means of the sacraments. Conscious of the earthen vessels in which we carry these treasures, God has given us an additional source of grace, one which will nourish and sustain the sacramental graces and assure their lasting effect unto salvation of the individual. As such, prayer is an essential corollary of the sacraments, one which a person cannot neglect without courting the chance of voiding the sacraments. But, in addition, prayer has a meaning all its own. Inasmuch as prayer is the beginning and the end of all spiritual activity, it may well be called the life of the soul. The outward activities of the spiritual man must be continually sustained and nourished and brought to fertility by inward prayer. Some would substitute work for prayer. They claim that work is prayer. And so it is, if rightfully understood. But this does not mean that labor can replace the duty of prayer, since it is not possible to labor properly without frequent use of prayer. The Wyclifites and Waldenses, according to Suarez, advocated what they called

¹ *The Mysteries of Christianity* (St. Louis: Herder Book Co., 1946), p. 565.

² *Homilia ad Neophyton*. "Second Nocturn of the Feast of the Precious Blood."

vital prayer, consisting in good works, even to the exclusion of all vocal prayer with the exception of the *Our Father*. For this reason, Suarez does not approve of this expression, though St. Francis de Sales uses it to indicate prayer reinforced by work, or work which is inspired by prayer.³

There should be no internal conflict between action and prayer, since prayer is the soul of action, if the latter should have any meaning at all. St. Catherine of Siena says that man must labor in the vineyard of God. First in the vineyard, which is one's own soul. Then in the vineyard of charity toward one's neighbor. Finally in the vineyard of the Church. Only a person who works well in the first of these three, cares to work in the other two. St. Bernard compares the man who concerns himself merely with active works to a channel, which passes on what it receives; whereas he should be like a reservoir, which first being filled, gives constantly of its overflow: "If thou hast wisdom, thou shalt prove a fountain-spring and not a channel."⁴ It is a philosophical axiom that no one can give what he does not possess, and unless we receive from God in prayer, we shall appear before our neighbor empty-handed. Still, among the faithful laborers in God's vineyard which is the Church, we find some who show little enthusiasm for prayer. Visible results are their immediate goal. They spend their energy in a thousand and one good works, while neglecting the one thing necessary. St. John of the Cross has some very striking things to say on this matter. These are his words.

³ *Catholic Encyclopedia*, XII, 347-48.

⁴ *In Cantico, Sermo XVIII*, n. 3.

A little pure love is more precious in the sight of God and the soul, and of greater profit to the Church, than are all the good works put together. Let those who are great workers, who purport to embrace the world with their outside activities, take note that they would be of far greater profit to the Church, and far more pleasing to God, apart from the good example they would give of themselves, if they would spend half their time in abiding with God in prayer. In this manner they would accomplish more with one piece of work, than they do now with a thousand, and that with less endeavor, since their prayer would be of great merit to others and of such spiritual strength to themselves.⁵

God's eternal design, not subject to change, is to transform a man inwardly, before he can be a useful tool in the hands of God. Nothing seems to censure our modern rush more peremptorily than the record of the hidden life of Nazareth, where thirty years of prayerful preparation are followed by scarcely three years of public ministration. In case a mutual relationship exists between prayer and work, it is evident that prayer deserves the first place. St. Thomas is very emphatic in asserting that the contemplation of divine things, and the union with God which it implies, cannot be conceived as being subordinate to action, since contemplation and union are far superior in character. "In respect to its nature, the contemplative life precedes the active and is superior to it, inasmuch as it applies itself to things which precede and are better. For this reason it moves and directs the active life."⁶ Union with God must both be the moving cause of the active

⁵ *Spiritual Canticle*, stanza XXVIII.

⁶ *Summa Theologica*, IIa IIae, q. 182, a. 4.

apostolate and the source from which it draws its lasting energy. To neglect this source, to the extent of making apostolic action supersede prayer, is exposing oneself to the "heresy of action," as Leo XIII rightly brands it, because it overthrows the order of charity by making the love of neighbor superior to the love of God. Says the French author, Henri Ghéon: "What is the point of classifying the friends of God as active and contemplative? The active are active only to the measure of their prayer."

Besides, there is an absolute necessity of prayer from a personal point of view. Theologians agree that prayer is necessary for salvation with a necessity of means, inasmuch as some graces cannot be merited. Such are the initial grace of conversion, the return to grace after mortal sin, and the grace of final perseverance. None of these graces can be ours in terms of just reward, but all of them can be obtained by prayer. Holy Scripture underlines this necessity directly and indirectly in several places. Our Lord reminded His disciples on the evening of His passion to watch and pray, lest they enter into temptation. "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matt. 26:41). St. Peter, filling out the thought, says: "Be sober, be watchful! For your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goes about seeking someone to devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same suffering befalls your brethren all over the world" (I Pet. 5:7-9). Nor do the Fathers fail to stress this necessity. St. Augustine remarks: "Prayer ascends and divine mercy descends. Low as is the earth and high as is heaven, God listens to the prayer of man."⁷ In this respect Bishop Dupanloup comments:

⁷ *Sermo* 226, "Concerning Time."

"Prayer, the great witness of our weakness, becomes a power redoubtable and irresistible to heaven itself. When man makes up his mind to pray, and he prays well, his weakness itself becomes strength. Prayer equals and surpasses the power of God. It triumphs over His will, His wrath, even over His justice, because of His mercy."⁸ Treating on the words of the Evangelist, "Ask, and it shall be given you. Seek, and you shall find. Knock, and it shall be opened to you" (Matt. 7:7), St. Jerome explains: "Whence it follows that he who does not ask does not receive. He who does not seek does not find. He who does not knock shall not have the doors of grace opened to him."⁹ St. Alphonsus finally does not hesitate to say that he who prays is certain to be saved, while he who fails to do so is courting damnation. "All the damned have been lost through lack of prayer. If they had prayed, they would have been saved. This will be the source of their greatest torment in hell, to know that they could have been saved, had they asked for God's graces."¹⁰

Since prayer is the beginning, the progress, and the completion of Christian life, our Lord has deigned to teach us a prayer which is at once the standard and model of all prayer: the Lord's Prayer. From the Evangelists we learn that Christ mentioned this prayer on two separate occasions: the first time publicly, when He gave His Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 6:9-13); and again privately, when one of His disciples addressed Him saying: "Lord, teach us to pray, even as John also taught his disciples"

⁸ First Sermon on Prayer (Lent, 1858).

⁹ Hieronymus in Capite. Cf. Matt. 7:8.

¹⁰ Treatise on Prayer, chap. I.

(Luke 11:1). Both places repeat substantially the same formula, seemingly indicating that the same prayer is sufficient to all. This point is clearly brought out by St. Teresa who, referring to one of her nuns, writes:

I know a nun who could never pray except vocally. She came to me once in great distress, saying she could not practice mental prayer or contemplation but could only pray vocally. I asked her how she prayed and I realized that, in faithfully saying the Our Father, she had been raised to pure contemplation and that the Lord had even given her the prayer of union.¹¹

Not only do Catholics and Protestants admire the Lord's Prayer because of its intrinsic beauty, but the Jews and even the Mohammedans consider it the finest expression of true spirituality. St. Augustine insists that its order should be maintained in all our prayers. "We may indeed use other forms, other words, but every request which does not in some manner reflect the Lord's Prayer, both in nature and in order of petitions, is unworthy of a Christian and cannot be listened to by God."¹² Thus in all our prayer we give preference to the most important matters first, such as God's honor and glory, the happy attainment of our last end, the accomplishment of the divine will. As for temporal favors, we subordinate them to those of the supernatural order, according to our Lord's maxim: "Seek first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all other things shall be given you besides" (Matt. 6:33). Being

¹¹ *Way of Perfection* (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1948), chap. XXXII.

¹² Sermon on the Lord's Prayer: *ad competentes*.

composed by our Lord, the *Our Father* is at once a perfect prayer and most effective in drawing upon us all needed graces. Says St. Cyprian: "The same Lord who made us, also taught us how to pray, so that our petitions should be more easily heard when we speak to the Father in the words offered to us by His Son."¹³ Besides being perfect and most effective, it is kept so simple and plain that it is within the reach of all. Nor does it matter that we constantly repeat the same formula, because we can always repeat it with fruit, provided we repeat it with devotion. In the Garden of Gethsemani, our Lord did not fear repetition, when "He went back, and prayed a third time, saying the same words" (Matt. 26:24).

During the Middle Ages, the *Our Father* was said in Latin, even by the uneducated. It was then most commonly known as the *Pater Noster*. With regard to the English text, now in use among Catholics, Father Thurston remarks: "We may note that this is derived not from the Rheims Testament, but from a version imposed upon England during the reign of Henry VIII, and given in the early editions of *The Book of Common Prayer*. This version became universally familiar and, though the Rheims Testament, in 1581, and King James' translators in 1611, provided somewhat different renderings of the text of St. Matthew, the older form was retained for their prayers by Protestants and Catholics alike." The Protestant addition, "For Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory," which appears in the Greek text, is undoubtedly an interpolation, and was never introduced into the Catholic version.¹⁴

¹³ Migne, *PL*, IV, "De dominica oratione."

¹⁴ *Catholic Encyclopedia*, IX, 356.

On the interpretation of the Lord's Prayer much has been written, despite the fact that it is so plainly simple, natural, and spontaneous that it scarcely needs explanation. In the quasi-official Catechism of the Council of Trent, drawn up in 1564 in accordance with the direction of the Council,¹⁵ we find an elaborate commentary on the Lord's Prayer, which will form the basis of the present analysis.

¹⁵ Sess. XXIV, *de reformatione*, chap. VII.

III

Our Father Who Art in Heaven

BEFORE we attempt to explain the various petitions of our Lord's Prayer, we must give some thought to the introductory address: Our Father who art in heaven. Regarding this preface, the Catechism says: "If we merely consider the number of words employed, we may consider it brief; but if we regard the ideas underlying the words, it is of the greatest importance and replete with the most sublime mysteries."¹ It is of the greatest importance, because these few words indicate the very attitude with which our Lord wishes us to approach God, namely, in the spirit of confidence and filial love, rather than with sentiments of fear and apprehension. It is replete with the most sublime mysteries, because the name Father, with its several implications, must lead us of necessity beyond the external manifestation of God in His creation and into the very depth of Divinity Itself.

In respect to us, who received this prayer from our Lord, the name *Father* suggests first of all the intimate

¹ *Catechism of the Council of Trent for Parish Priests*, trans. by John A. McHugh, O.P., and Charles J. Callan, O.P. (New York: Joseph F. Wagner, Inc., 1954), part IV, "The Lord's Prayer," p. 332.

relationship which exists between Creator and creature. It is a natural relationship we refer to, which is accounted for simply by the infinity of the divine nature and our dependence on it. God can give existence to finite beings because He is Being Itself. For this reason, the exemplar and ideal of our natural existence must be found in God, after whose image and likeness we are made. At the same time, the motive for producing such finite imitations of His own absolute existence must be discovered in God's personal and efficient love for this perfection. Not only did God make the world and all it contains for the benefit of His reasonable creature, but He also continues to govern it by His wisdom and goodness, and preserves it by His almighty power. It is in this sense that we say in the Creed: "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth," and attest to the common brotherhood of man, under the universal fatherhood of God.

Of the divine providence in respect to our natural existence, our Lord spoke beautifully in the Sermon of the Mount.

Do not be anxious for your life, what you shall eat; nor for your body, what you shall put on. Is not the life a greater thing than the food, and the body more than the clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they do not sow, or reap, or gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are not you of much more value than they? (Matt. 6:25-26).

Here our Lord speaks mainly of divine providence in regard to our bodily necessities. What are we to say of our spiritual needs? In this connection, the Catechism suggests that we mention a realistic fact which repeatedly

escapes our attention, namely that each man from birth has an angel commissioned to guard him.² This truth has not been defined by the Church, and is consequently not an article of faith. But it states the mind of the Church, as St. Jerome expresses it, and emphasizes the dignity of the human soul. Not only the baptized, but every soul that comes into the world receives a guardian spirit. This, at least, is the general belief, although St. Basil, and possibly St. Chrysostom, would hold that only Christians are so privileged.³ The general acceptance of this consoling truth finds its foundation in Holy Scripture, as the Psalmist expresses it: "There shall no evil come to thee, nor shall the scourge come near thy dwelling. For He has given His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways" (Ps. 90:10-11). To this are added the well known words of our Lord: "See that you do not despise one of these little ones; for I tell you, their angels in heaven always behold the face of My Father in heaven" (Matt. 18:10). The latter text also confirms the twofold aspect of the doctrine, that even children have guardian angels, and that these same angels do not lose the immediate vision of God while they fulfill their mission on earth. "Because we are children of God," says Father Olier, "He appoints to us as tutors the princes of His realm, who hold it an honor to have us in their charge."⁴

Returning again to the introductory address of the Lord's Prayer, we find that it is a unique and time-honored custom to address God with the title of Father. "Is this the return

² *Ibid.*, p. 333.

³ *Catholic Encyclopedia*, VII, 49-50.

⁴ *Pensées choisies*, p. 171.

thou makest to the Lord, O foolish and senseless people," Moses demands; "is not He thy Father, that has possessed thee, and made thee, and created thee?" (Deut. 32:6). God cannot renounce or forsake His people, even though we show scant gratitude for His great solicitude. Said the Lord: "Can a woman forget her infant, so as not to have pity on the son of her womb? And if she should forget, yet will not I forget thee" (Is. 49:15). Of this paternal solicitude and thoughtful concern we have an example in the case of our first parents, shortly after the fall. Having ignored and violated God's command, they had lost their state of original justice with all its accompanying privileges. In holy anger God drove them out of Paradise and, in order to preclude all hope of return, stationed Cherubims at the entrance, and a flaming sword. But God did not cease to love them and, taking pity on their destitution in body and soul, made them garments of skins, and clothed them (Gen. 3:21). Even in chastisement God shows His mercy for generation upon generation, and from eternity unto eternity. Speaking about the human carnage of World War I, our Lord is alleged to have said to Sister Benigna Consolata Ferrero:

It is not a chastisement of My justice upon the world, but one sent by My mercy in order to save a multitude of souls running to their eternal ruin. One moment suffices for the Father to gain a soul. And, in regard to those who remain obstinate, it is mercy also to shorten their lives here below in order that their torments may be less dreadful in eternity.

But above the creation of the world and the divine providence to sustain it, looms our adoption within the

divine family by means of grace. It was a privilege which Adam and Eve enjoyed before the fall. This elevation of our first parents to the state of habitual grace and supernatural friendship with God is not equally elaborated in Holy Scripture. St. Augustine maintains that the story of our first parents, related in Genesis, makes no explicit mention of this privilege which raised their natural relationship with God far above itself. Only the creation of man's human nature is plainly narrated, since Moses intended to show how visible things came into existence, and how the production of man was the high point of this creation. About the supernatural consecration, which God gave to His first human creature, the sacred writer preserved a discreet silence, since the sublime dignity which is the portion of God's adopted children was too deep to be fathomed by the people for whom he wrote.⁵ The gift of integrity, on the other hand, is readily indicated in the Old Testament. When Sacred Scripture relates that Adam and Eve had acquired the undesirable knowledge of sin; that their concupiscence grew to unknown proportions; that they were spending the rest of their days under the spectre of death, the sacred writer implicitly reveals that enjoying the corresponding privileges had been the proper condition of man prior to sin. Taken from the standpoint of our first parents, even they could not have been aware of their previous dignity as children of God, unless by faith and by the light of grace, while their prevailing condition, bereaved of integrity, came directly under their observation. God's kindness and mercy shown to them after the fall, although mixed with rightful indignation, could have

⁵ *De Genesi contra Manichaeos*, Bk. II, chap. VIII.

been easily mistaken for a somewhat modified, but nevertheless supernatural friendship. As a matter of fact, God never allowed the occasion of Adam's fall to obliterate His divine plans in respect to the human race. No sooner had Eve passed the blame on the serpent than God announced the coming of a second Eve, and the redemption of the human race in His divine Son. "I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel" (Gen. 3:15). Again in keeping with the same policy, Sacred Scripture remains silent in reference to the moment that Adam and Eve recovered the state of sanctifying grace. Assuming, however, that they experienced an immediate change of mind in the plain sight of their sinful transgression, and that their normal confusion, under the action of God's grace, took on the form of supernatural repentance, we may well believe that their return to habitual grace coincided with their acceptance of the veiled promise of future redemption. On the other hand, it could have been a gradual process which made them realize the enormity of their crime. Whatever be the case, we do know that they returned to grace, for it is an established fact that their memory is held sacred in the Church, their names having been inscribed in the official catalogue of saints.

The mystery of our adoption into the divine family by means of grace, far excels our establishment into the human family by means of creation. The former is a special, supernatural work of God, wholly and entirely distinct from creation. By it, God gives immeasurably more to His creature than the latter possesses or possibly could

claim for the perfection of his nature. It is an operation by which God builds upon the foundation laid in creation, but by which the creature is lifted far above creation and is made to participate in the divine nature. That this is a sheer gift, presented without any necessity on God's part, and without any right on the part of the creature, is at once evident. It is important that we distinguish this higher activity of God in the soul from creation. In fact, it does not find its foundation in God's creative power, but rather in His generative power, the same by which He brings forth His eternal Son within His bosom. For the very process of sanctifying a soul by means of adoption finds its ultimate justification in the mystery of the Blessed Trinity, of which it is at once an external imitation and a faithful reproduction. Nor do we speak of creation when we refer to the innermost process which produces the three distinct persons within the Deity. The Son proceeds from the Father's own substance, which passes over to the Son, leaving Him in full possession of the very nature proper to the Father. In the production of the Holy Spirit, Father and Son commune with each other, move and live in each other with an eternal surrender, which emanates in substantial love. This is the Holy Spirit. In the first instance, we speak of a process of begetting, as says the Creed: "I believe in the only-begotten Son of God, begotten, not made." In the second, we speak of procession: "and in the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Son." The first generation of the Son from the Father provides us with the key to understand our elevation to the status of adopted children. Because the eternal Father has a Son in whom He takes infinite delight, can

He have reason to multiply outside Himself the image which He bears within His bosom? By this process, He not only glorifies His own infinite, generative power, but His Son as well, who is thus reborn in the creature. But, while we perceive in the Son a communication of the divine nature by way of natural necessity and in its entirety, our participation in the same divine nature is accidental and limited. It is brought about, not by actual generation, but by a process of love and grace. For that reason the adoption of man into the divine family is even more strikingly exemplified by the second divine production, since adoption as a whole is a product of divine love. The Holy Spirit is given to the creature precisely because in the outpouring of the mutual love of Father and Son within the Deity, the same Holy Spirit carries this character of gift within Himself. Thus we may say that the temporal giving of the Holy Spirit to creatures must be regarded as a prolongation of the eternal giving from which He Himself proceeds, since in the last analysis a gift is essentially an outpouring of love. And we may say likewise that the communication of the divine nature from Father to Son can find its way to the creature only in the further communication of the Holy Spirit. Thus the Holy Spirit becomes the seed of all other fruits which God produces outside Himself, and brings about the union between God and the creature by means of grace. All this illustrates that we have an additional reason for calling God our Father, inasmuch as by means of grace we are put in touch with God directly and are made to participate, in a limited measure, in the very nature of the eternal Father as His adoptive children.

But above the creation of the world and the divine

providence which sustains it, also above our adoption within the divine family by means of habitual grace, towers our incorporation in Christ, which makes the Lord our elder Brother, and God our Father, in a sense analogous to the manner in which He is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. For the Christian there is no life of grace except by incorporation in Christ by baptism, from which all related graces flow as from its source. In teaching us the *Our Father*, Christ emphasizes the word "our," in order to indicate that He makes no distinction, and associates us with Himself. It is as though He says in effect: If God is My Father, He is also your Father. For that matter, and in this sense, only the baptized have an intrinsic right to call God their Father. Such is the life-giving vitality of Christ's sacred humanity. Through our solidarity with His human body in His mystical body, we become participants of the same rights, the same glorious privileges which are His in His humanity, inclusive of the claim of spiritual childhood, by which we call God our own in union with our Lord. In the early days of Christianity, the Lord's Prayer was not taught to the unbaptized. The first formal recitation of this prayer was reserved to the solemn rite of baptism, and still constitutes a part of the Roman ritual in the administration of the sacrament. In this prayer, the vital thought of the Incarnation comes back to life. Christ is indeed the head of all creation, and of the human race in particular, by reason of His Incarnation. Not, however, in the sense in which Adam is the head of the human race, in whom the propagation of human nature took its origin. Christ took unto Himself that human nature from the race which was already established. But,

while Adam stands wholly and entirely within the race, Christ stands above it, because He is not only the Creator of the human race by His essential identity with God's creative power, but by the fact that He took human nature unto Himself and united it with His divine nature, He elevated and drew the entire race into Himself, incorporated it, in order to direct, rule, and guide it unto a new and supernatural destiny. Christ is offered to the soul in justification for its possession and enjoyment that, in and through Him, we may possess and enjoy the glory of the Father. Thus we begin to know the Father, as our Lord knows Him, in the divine Word, the substantial expression of the Father's own knowledge, as says the Apostle: "God, who commands light to shine out of darkness, has shone in our hearts, to give enlightenment concerning the knowledge of the glory of God, shining on the face of Christ Jesus" (II Cor. 4:6). From now on, Christ holds the intermediate position between God and creature in an actual and visual manner, placing the latter in direct and organic contact with the Godhead. It is because of this incorporation in our Lord and from the intimate union which results from it that St. Paul attributes all of Christ's activities as the head of the human race to all its members. Conversely, all of our activities which are performed as members of Christ, are His. For Christ acts and lives in us with regard to those activities which proceed from Him and are carried out by the power residing in us, which is the power of His own Holy Spirit. Not that in this process we lose our own individuality. We quite retain our own autonomy but, along with it, we are able to be pervaded by Christ and assimilated to His personality. In this sense

Christ is ours and we are Christ's, to the extent that we belong to Him more than we belong to ourselves. The Council of Trent attests to this vital and living union between Christ and us. As the head commands its members, as the vine penetrates all its branches with its sap, so Christ Jesus exercises His influence on all the just at each moment. It is that influence which precedes, accompanies, and crowns all their good works and makes them agreeable to God and meritorious in His sight (Sess. VI, c. 16).

In this connection we may recall that we are participants also in Christ's sacred passion. It lies within the plan of the Father to treat us no differently from the manner in which He treated His Son. If Christ was sacrificed as the head of the mystical body, the same mystical body is to be sacrificed through Christ's power and according to the model of His real body. The sacrifice of Christ was no mere symbol. It is utterly real, in the sense that it is continued and accomplished in us. Not only that, but Christ's sacrifice as a free oblation in true accomplishment of the desire of the Father, elevates our sacrifice to the perfection of our willing acceptance. What makes suffering honorable and beautiful is not the distress or the suffering itself, but rather the freedom with which it is accepted, and the noble motive of the sufferer. It is the more commendable when it is accepted with greater freedom and with less limitation of love. Thus our sufferings are no longer a mere necessity or a justified punishment for sin, but, when lovingly accepted, they carry with them God's infallible pledge that they will be received, with the sacrifice of Christ in us, as an acceptable gift.

When we love and appreciate this privilege of incorporation in ourselves, we shall also love and appreciate the same in the brethren who share this privilege with us. For this reason again we say *Our Father*, rather than *my Father*. In this manner, St. Chrysostom calls the *Our Father* the fraternal prayer because "when we pray to God the way Christ has instructed us, we do not pray for ourselves alone, but for all Christians as well: begging for them the same graces, spiritual and temporal, which we ask for ourselves. God willingly listens to the Christian who prays not only for himself, but also for others. To pray for ourselves is an inspiration of nature; to pray for others is an inspiration of grace. Necessity compels us to pray for ourselves; charity makes us pray for the neighbor."⁶ There is real solidarity in prayer. No one can recite the Lord's Prayer with sincerity of heart and maintain a superior attitude toward others, be it because of affluence, social position, color, or rank. If God considers us all His children, we feel compelled to treat our neighbor in like manner. For this comprises the first and greatest commandment and our essential perfection. Says St. Paul: "You are all the children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. For all you who have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor freeman; there is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:26-28). Such is Christ's way of teaching charity. True prayer gets its value not from the mind but from the heart; and the best prayer is that in which there is most love. No one ever prayed without learning something. Were the

⁶ *Hom. XIV operis imperfecti in Matt.*

Lord's Prayer to teach us only this lesson, its real worth would be beyond computation.

We finally say: Our Father, who art in heaven. God is everywhere and in all places, and we perceive His presence in His creature. But in heaven, His majesty and splendor is evident to angels and saints alike to the measure that they were made participants of God's own glory. Habitual grace in us is the beginning of this glory; and seeing God through a mirror and in an obscure manner, makes us eagerly await the day that we too shall see Him face to face. This nostalgia is expressed in every prayer. But the way being long and the dangers many, it is the significant design of prayer to keep our hope alive, and our eyes trained on heaven.

Hallowed Be Thy Name

THE prayer of this petition concerns God's extrinsic and accidental glory, the praise which God receives from creatures who accept the redemption of His Son and live according to the tenets of Christian faith. In regard to this petition, St. Thomas remarks: "We ask that the name of God be manifested so that it may be known and held as holy."¹ Even our most sincere prayer could not add anything to that glory of God which is substantially and essentially His. Yet it is more than a gesture, more than an act of gratitude for the supernatural gifts which we received when we were called to the true faith. It is an expression of our latent desire to make all share in the blessings of the Incarnation, since there is nothing pure, nothing holy, nothing fully desirable on earth which does not proceed from the sanctity of the Father, as expressed in the Son, and made available to the Church, the visible representative of the Word Incarnate, by the Holy Spirit. In the words of the Apostle, our Lord "loved the Church, and delivered Himself up for her, that He might sanctify her, cleansing her in the bath of water by means of the

¹ *Sermones et opuscula* (Paris, 1881), p. 116.

word" (Eph. 5:26). According to the Fathers, this word of life signifies the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, in which man is baptized, redeemed, and sanctified by the merits of Christ. Since there is no expiation, no sacramental redemption, no incorporation in one over whom the divine name has not been invoked, we desire and pray that all may abandon the gloom and melancholy of infidelity, and enter into the light and joy of the Gospel. Thus our prayer goes out for those who are seated in the darkness of idolatry and paganism, that they may come to the true revelation of the splendor and glory of God. We pray for the many who are deceived by fallacy and error, and whose entrance into the realm of grace means a final return to their Father's house, from which their forebears strayed in schism or heresy. We pray for the children of God's own race, whose place we took as a chosen people. For our wandering brethren we pray, who have lost the integrity of their baptism, that they may be readmitted into the bosom of the Church. Not that we stop at prayer. We add a sincere effort to help others by instructing, advising, correcting, strengthening them. Where such a direct and active apostolate is impossible, we restrict ourselves to the apostolate of example, of which St. Peter wrote to the first Christians: "Behave yourselves honorably among the pagans; that, whereas they slander you as evildoers, they may through observing you by reason of your good works glorify God in the day of visitation" (I Peter 2:12). Or in the words of our Lord: "You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Neither do men light a lamp and put it under the measure, but upon the lamp-stand, so as to

give light to all in the house. Even so let your light shine before men, in order that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven" (Matt. 5:14-16). Says Abbé Huvelin: "How sad it is to think that by our immortification and self-seeking we may be guilty of much evil which could have been prevented if we had shown the generosity of conquering ourselves and thus draw down divine light and grace upon souls." Example is of necessity a power for good or evil. For better or worse, no one goes through life without influencing others. As someone remarked: "Be careful how you live. Your life may be the only book on religion some people read." We finally pray for the just, that they may persevere in the life of grace and direct to God all their thoughts, affections, and aspirations. When we see some surpass others, ourselves included, we sincerely rejoice and give thanks to God, who gives grace to each according to the measure of Christ's bestowal (Eph. 4:7).

It is evident that this petition must primarily be concerned with the extrinsic and accidental glory which God derives from our own acceptance of faith. Under the influence of the will and of grace, the theological virtue of faith inclines the mind to yield a firm assent to revealed truths, because of the authority of God. As such, it is the foundation of our supernatural life, or, as the Council of Trent states, "it is the beginning, the basis and the root of all justification" (Sess. VI, c. 8). It is the beginning, because it is the mysterious means used by God to initiate us into His life, to make us know Him as He knows Himself. It is the basis and the root of our justification, since faith determines the actual attainment of God and of all

things that concern Him most intimately. It is a new light added to reason, which enables us to look into a new world, the supernatural world. It is like a telescope that enables us to discover far-away objects invisible to the naked eye. But this is an imperfect simile, for a telescope is but an external instrument, while faith penetrates into the very recesses of the mind and sharpens its power of perception as well as its field of vision. In order to receive a better concept of this great privilege which became ours when we were called to the true faith, we must enter somewhat deeper into the mystery of faith, more so because it constitutes the very objective of the present petition by which we pray that God may open our eyes to the light which floods our souls and make our hearts responsive to its mysterious operations.

Among the fundamental principles of theology we find the general adage that reason precedes faith. This is true in the sense that created reason lays the groundwork for faith, explores the natural order of things upon which is erected the supernatural order to be known by faith. Reason also precedes in order to convince man of the existence and credibility of supernatural revelation, and hence of the obligation to believe in it. But with all this, the fact remains that no one comes to faith by research alone. One may be thoroughly convinced of the truth and yet not be able to make the act of faith. If a man does not wish to believe, no reason will convince him; or if he be convinced, no conviction will bring him to the true faith. For this grace is required. To make the final transition from unbelief to belief, God must furnish the stimulus. It is precisely grace that has pushed man thus far, has

manifested itself to him through the unrest of his heart, a feeling which will not leave him even if he turns away from it. Thus it must be said that grace prepared the way for faith, rather than reason, inasmuch as grace put reason to action and flayed the will into an act of free acceptance. For faith is not merely a necessary conviction of the intellect through its own insight, but it is rather a subjection of the understanding through the will under the influence of grace which, according to the words of the Apostle, "brings every mind into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5).

The relative, subordinate position of reason to faith is further emphasized by the fact that reason is called upon to work for faith, once it has accepted it, so that faith may submit to a systematic study and develop the rich resources of its own subject matter. Although the Vatican Council defined that God, the beginning and the end of all things, can be known from creation by the natural light of reason (Rom. 1:20), it is equally of faith that such knowledge is painfully inadequate and imperfect.² Reason must place its natural concepts at the disposal of faith; it must devote its natural associative and discursive powers to discover the interconnection between the truths of faith and the motivation of the one by the other; it must bring out the implications of each of the revealed truths and unfold the full wealth of consequences contained therein. While reason thus serves faith by laboring in its behalf, it does not lose its right and duty to work also for itself. Only by fully developing its own talent can human reason efficiently and effectively aid supernatural faith. St. Thomas, the great

² Sess. III, c. 2.

liberator of the human mind, has reinstated the habit of thinking to its logical place of preeminence. It is the very life of Thomistic teaching that reason can be trusted. Man is essentially a rational being, and his God-given treasure of intellectuality is the first requisite to give God a rational service. Far from destroying reason's natural autonomy, faith imparts to reason a higher freedom, even raises it to a loftier and supernatural plane, although it can remain there only by clinging to faith. Says Father Scheeben:

The rule of faith is at bottom nothing but the rule of divine reason, which takes possession of our souls in faith. If human reason submits to the demands of the divine reason or reverently follows its lead, divine reason assures human reason of its rightful dominion over natural truth, and admits it to a dominion over a higher kingdom of truth. The full force of the Savior's statement applies here: "If you abide in My word, you shall be My disciples indeed, and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32). Divine truth, which we take secure possession of in faith, can and will keep our reason free from the dominion of any error that contradicts it, will aid it in its investigations to pursue an undeviating course toward truth, and will never permit it to be misled by a will-o'-the-wisp. And as the Son of God has made us free in the highest sense by endowing us with the liberty of the children of God, so our reason will be supremely free when, elevated above its natural limits, it not only overthrows error, but like the eagle, borne on the wings of faith, soars up to the heights of the most sacred truth.³

Here we may consider the necessary darkness which

³ *The Mysteries of Christianity*, p. 782.

continues to enshroud many mysteries of faith, regardless of the added light which reason receives from the latter. Although we have an immediate and eminent knowledge of God as the supreme Cause, of His omnipotence, and of the divine decree and plan according to which He is pleased to act in the outer world, at present we behold neither the divine essence, nor the power, the goodness, and the plan of God in the clearness of vision. Our understanding of the way God acts and communicates Himself is far from being a perfect knowledge. The reason is obvious. Faith is not vision, but it leads to vision; it is the way and means, but not the end. Faith prefigures light, not in the sense that it makes supernatural knowledge and truth less obscure—for faith must be forever the substance of things to be hoped for, the evidence of things that are not seen (Heb. 11:1)—but because it leads to truth, much in the manner that the Wise Men were led by the star. We are called upon to relinquish the idea of clarity and comprehensibility as the standard of truth in favor of mystery and darkness, the acceptance of the incomprehensible as transcending what is comprehended, in order to find light and a new vision in a blind faith. Besides, this darkness is not intrinsic. If we accept the sending of the eternal Word into the world in order to initiate man into the mysteries of God, could we expect anything less than intimate disclosures about things of an invisible world, which eye has not seen nor ear heard, and which could not enter into the heart of man? Where there is darkness, it must be in us, for such truths baffle our scrutiny not because of their inherent obscurity and confusion, but because of their excessive brilliance and sublime beauty,

which no human eye can behold without going blind. St. John of the Cross gives a plausible explanation.

Faith, say the theologians, is a habit of the soul, certain and obscure. And the reason for its being a habit is that it makes us believe truths revealed by God himself which transcend all natural light and exceed all human understanding beyond all proportion. Hence it follows that, for the soul this excessive light of faith, which is given to it, is thick darkness to the soul, for it overwhelms greater things and does away with smaller things, even as the light of the sun overwhelms all other lights whatsoever: when it shines and disables our visual faculty, they appear not to be lights at all.⁴

Far from regretting this darkness, we rejoice that by faith a feeble ray of supernatural light is granted us in this world of darkness to lead us on our way to the glorious possession of light eternal.

When we speak of faith as a guiding light to essential truth, the question arises: what is the manner of operation by which God makes this truth available to our eyes? Are we to assume that objective truth, in this instance God Himself, must in some way become assimilable before our minds are able to receive it? Or must we rather accept that our minds must be adapted and raised till they are capable of its reception? The natural tendency is indeed to reduce all above us to our own level. But the doctrine of supernatural grace puts before us the necessity of being raised ourselves, and the obligation to elevate our way of seeing

⁴ *The Complete Works of St. John of the Cross*, trans. and ed. by E. Allison Peers (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1953), 1, 67.

and knowing and lift it to the level of God. The act of faith implies surrender of the personal power of sight, and though this act of surrender is followed by an immense extension of vision, it is in itself an abnegation, the relinquishment of our claim of self-sufficiency. The light of faith confers upon our minds this unprecedented extension of vision, a deepening of our understanding, an enrichment of our natural powers beyond recognition, but it is to be bought at a price, the price of surrender, the sacrifice of what we ourselves are or claim to be.

Then again, a new life has to grow forth in the soul which will enable the objects of faith to strike root in the soul. This new life must of necessity be a life of the spirit, as opposed to a life of the senses. In this respect the Apostle remarks: "The sensual man does not perceive the things that are of the Spirit of God, for it is foolishness to him and he cannot understand, because it is examined spiritually. But the spiritual man judges all things" (1 Cor. 2:14-15). St. Paul refers to the sensual man who with his entire nature is opposed to the Spirit of God, whereas the spiritual man is not only raised above the animal man, but is animated and pervaded by the same Holy Spirit. Unless a man is in some way or other moved, enlightened, and animated by the Spirit of God, he cannot effectively grasp the doctrine of the Spirit. Without this illumination, supernatural objects must ever appear strange to him, and his relations with them must lack vitality. By this illumination of the Holy Spirit, as indicated above, we understand first a more or less perfect, immediate enlightenment of our reason about the matter to be believed, an enlightenment normally connected with the grace of faith, or even con-

veyed by this grace. Here it has reference to the radiation of the love and life of the Holy Spirit, which becomes our own light through faith. Informed by sanctifying grace, our faith is vivified; supernatural objects are brought to us in a connatural manner; much of their mystery is lifted while we move steadily closer to God.

St. Francis de Sales summarizes the present doctrine in the following manner.

When the obscure light of faith has entered our spirit, not by force of reasoning or show of argument, but solely by the sweetness of its presence, it makes the understanding believe and obey with so much authority that the certitude it gives us of the truth surpasses all other certitudes. The Jews saw the miracles and heard the marvelous teachings of our Savior, but being indisposed to receive faith, they perceived the force of the argument, but did not relish the sweetness of the conclusion, and therefore did not acquiesce in its truth. The act of faith consists in this very acquiescence of the spirit, which, having received the graceful light of truth, accepts it by means of a sweet, yet powerful and solid assurance and certitude, found in the authority of the revelation which has been made to her.⁵

Describing the further operation of grace and its development after this first act of faith, the Saint continues:

Faith also includes a beginning of love, which the heart feels toward the divine things revealed to her. The reason why the heart loves them is because of

⁵ *Treatise on the Love of God* (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1942), pp. 102–3.

the good which they reveal; but the measure and quantity of this love depend on the excellence and dignity of the good which is loved. The divine inspiration comes to us, and prevents us, moving our wills to love. And if we do not repulse it, it goes with us and keeps near us, to incite us and press us ever forward; and if we do not abandon it, it does not abandon us, till such time as it has brought us to the haven of most holy charity.⁶

Speaking of the inner experience of charity, St. John remarks: "Everyone who loves is born of God, and knows God. He who does not love does not know God: for God is love" (1 John 4:8). In an attempt to describe the nature of this new and fuller knowledge of God, which comes to us by charity, St. Thomas refers to the text of the Apocalypse: "To him who overcomes, I will give the hidden manna, and I will give him a white pebble, and upon the pebble a new name written, which no one knows except he who receives it" (Apoc. 2:17). The Angelic Doctor explains: "The just man can have an authentic knowledge of the existence of sanctifying grace within himself, because whoever receives it knows by experiencing a certain sweetness, which he who does not receive it, does not perceive."⁷ Amplifying this statement of St. Thomas, Father Garrigou-Lagrange remarks:

The just man can experience within himself the effect of filial love as making known to him the vivifying presence of God somewhat as the soul, through its act of intellect and will, knows its own

⁶ *Ibid.*, chap. XVII, XXI.

⁷ *Summa Theologica*, Ia IIae, q. 112, a. 5.

existence experimentally and without reasoning, perceiving not thought in general but its own act of thinking and, by it, its own proper existence. In this way, its act is at once that which is known by experience, and that which makes known to the soul its own substance.⁸

As much must be said of the effect of filial love in relation to the life-giving presence of God in the soul; for, by the special gift of wisdom, God makes Himself felt in some way as the radical principle of our whole life, more intimate to us than we are ourselves. To produce this non-discursive and quasi-experimental knowledge, as St. Thomas calls it, the Holy Spirit uses a means prepared by the infused virtue of charity, namely, the soul's con naturality or conformity to divine things. As our love for God grows, so does our apprehension of His eternal truth and supreme goodness. The good may remain hidden in divine obscurity and out of the reach of our understanding, as is the case with suffering which is sent our way, but supernatural love makes us taste and see that it is good. In this manner the Holy Spirit uses our interior disposition to love, which He Himself has aroused, as a means to make God's presence manifest to us, as says our Lord: "He who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him" (John 14:21).⁹ There are two reasons given why St. Thomas uses the term quasi-experimental, and not simply experimental, to designate this manifestation of God to the soul. The first reason:

⁸ *The Love of God and the Cross of Jesus* (St. Louis: Herder Book Co., 1951), I, 154-55.

⁹ *Summa Theologica*, IIa IIae, q. 97, a. 2, ad 2um; *De Veritate*, q. 26, a. 3, ad 18um.

because there is no immediate and absolute knowledge of God possible except in the beatific vision. While on earth, our vision of God must remain of necessity incomplete, since we experience God not directly but through the effect of filial love. The second reason is bound up with the pronouncement of the Council of Trent, which declares that a special revelation of God is needed for anyone to know with absolute certainty that he is in the state of grace.¹⁰ One who is not the beneficiary of such revelation enjoys a relative, though reasonable, certitude to which he concludes from certain signs, such as his joy in divine things, contempt for the things of the world, and peace of conscience.

The all-important feature of the process of knowing God remains the direct operation of the Holy Spirit, working through the gift of wisdom, and suggesting divine intervention ever more convincingly. As a supernatural habit, this gift places us directly in communication with God, as St. Pius X expresses it: "Wisdom is the gift by which the mind is lifted up from earthly and transitory things, enabling us to contemplate things eternal, that is to say God Himself, the eternal Truth, and to relish and love Him, in whom consists all our good."¹¹ Wisdom is the mystery of divine life, of which love is both the principle and the end. It embraces all created realities, with God as their principal and final cause. It is the brightness of eternal light, the unspotted mirror of God's majesty, the image of His goodness. To accept supernatural faith and a

¹⁰ Sess. VI, c. 12.

¹¹ *Compendium of Catechetical Instruction*, trans. by John Hagan (New York: Benziger Bros., 1928), I, 261.

grace-illumined nature commits one to a completely theocentric position. We speak of believing in God. This expresses more than simple faith. To believe in God is to direct one's whole soul, understanding, will, and heart to God and to place oneself entirely at God's service. To believe in God is to give whatever we have and are and ever hope to be to God, trusting in Him implicitly. In the wake of this acknowledgment of our innate insufficiency in matters spiritual, of our utter nothingness apart from God, we come to realize our complete transfiguration in and before God. We are set free, through grace, from all created things, not by rejection of them, but by a new evaluation of their meaning. Henceforth, and in their own right, these things are deprived of the value which in a purely human view they were accorded, but in exchange, and in their degree, they acquire a new value as means through which God manifests His glory, and by which we attain our final end. Here we may recall that the source of this participation in divine wisdom is our Lord who, in the words of St. Paul, "has become for us God-given wisdom" (1 Cor. 1:30). By taking our flesh, the personal Wisdom of God has flooded it with all treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and made us participants in the very essence which constitutes the divine Word. Through faith we receive the incarnate, personal Wisdom of God within ourselves, and by His presence in our souls He generates our divine-human wisdom as a reflection of Himself. Although He remains invisible here below under the form He thus assumes, we can taste the sweetness of the Spirit of divine Wisdom which has become our own. The God-Man is indeed the most concrete and the greatest objective

revelation of God. Of course, the real center, the root, and the summit of the entire supernatural order is the Triune God, the bosom of the eternal Father, from which Christ Himself came forth, and to which He returns with His mystical body. But as long as we have not yet entered with Christ into the very bosom of the eternal Father, we must content ourselves with beholding the invisible in the visible. He Himself in His earthly form is the way upon which we must travel in our ascent to the summit. Basing ourselves in this manner upon the visible manifestations of Jesus Christ, we shall press on to His invisible glory and that of the Father through the operations of the Holy Spirit, as says our Lord: "Who follows Me does not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12).

Thy Kingdom Come

THERE can be no mistake about the fundamental significance of this second petition. St. Thomas indicates three traditional meanings: the vindication of God's supreme rule over men, the reign of God in us, and the glory of paradise.¹ This agrees with the explanation of St. Pius X, who likewise notes three separate, spiritual kingdoms: the reign of God on earth in the Holy Catholic Church; the reign of God in the individual, which is the reign of grace; and the reign of God in heaven, which is the reign of glory.² John the Baptist included all three when he made God's kingdom the keynote of his message to Israel: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:2). Our Lord, in turn, continued this message while going about Galilee, teaching in the synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom (Matt. 4:23). He made it the principal topic of His discourse, referring to it in several parables. He spoke of it a last time on the day of His ascension, when He commissioned His disciples to be witnesses of His newly established kingdom in Jeru-

¹ *Sermones et opuscula*, pp. 126-30.

² *Compendium of Christian Doctrine*, I, 261.

salem and in all Judea and Samaria and even to the very ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). A fourth kingdom, that of nature, precedes the three mentioned. To this realm the Psalmist pointed when he said: "Thy kingdom is a kingdom of all ages; and Thy dominion endures throughout all generations" (Ps. 144:13). Evidently this empire could not be the object of our petition inasmuch as its dominion is already completely established. All creatures of necessity submit to this kingdom, whether they are on earth, in heaven, or under the earth.

Having made God's honor and glory, in its extrinsic and accidental manifestation of faith joyfully accepted, the proper object of our first petition, we press on in logical order and ask for a more effective participation in the life of grace. This is the kingdom which Christ compared to a treasure hidden in a field: "a man who finds it hides it, and in his joy goes and sells all that he has and buys that field" (Matt. 13:44). Or again, it is like a merchant in search of fine pearls. "When he finds a single pearl of great price, he goes and sells all that he has and buys it" (Matt. 13:46). This treasure, this pearl of great price we carry in our hearts, as our Lord clearly indicated: "The kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21). We are illumined by the light of the Holy Spirit, who works upon us by His gift of understanding, that we may come to a better appraisal of this life of grace.

Like wisdom, understanding is an intellectual faculty which perfects the infused virtue of faith. The former concerns itself directly with the knowledge of God. The latter puts us in indirect contact with Divinity by giving us a deeper insight in the ineffable revelations of God's

external works. Though a complete understanding of God's mysteries, like a full and comprehensive vision of God Himself, must be reserved for life hereafter, this knowledge places us in touch with a great number of spiritual realities. Reading between mysteries, it makes us reach the heart of things and shows us the interrelation of these divine revelations. It aids us to see them as a definite unit, beautiful because of its supreme simplicity, and ever reflecting the simplicity of God Himself. Among all the mysteries revealed to us by God, the mystery of the Incarnation holds the middle stage, since it is the very center of God's external manifestations. It reflects and brings down to earth the interior life of God in a singular manner, while at the same time it conditions us to a glorious participation in the life proper to God. It is a matter of deepest speculation to determine the manner in which the exterior works of God are connected with the mystery of the Godhead as with their principle, and how they are united in one for the communication of God to the creature. Suffice it to say at this point that the very essence of the Trinity consists in the substantial communication of the divine nature from the Father to the other two divine Persons. This procession of the Son from the Father by interior knowledge, and of the Holy Spirit from the essence of the Father and Son by the process of interior love, finds its reproduction primarily in the mysterious operations of grace, which is designed to give the creature a greater knowledge of God and an increase of supernatural love by actual participation in the divine nature. In our respect, the mystery of God's interior existence reaches its culmination in the Incarnation of the divine Word, where the Second Person

of the eternal Trinity becomes present to a creature in hypostatic union, and extends His personal relationship with God to man. Since the mystery of the Incarnation thus forms the very foundation of our justification and sanctification, and is the basis of all the graces which come to us during life, a deeper understanding of this mystery is imperative, more particularly so because it constitutes the proper objective of this second petition of the Lord's Prayer.

Proceeding from the principle that supernatural grace in the creature is essentially a participation in the divine life, and given the fact that Adam before the fall enjoyed this privilege gratuitously, we must accept that after the fall God's wisdom and omnipotence could have determined on several ways to restore Adam to his previous favor, without resorting to the Incarnation of the eternal Word residing in His bosom. This is as much as saying that the Incarnation of the Son of God cannot be fully explained by original sin. The infinite dignity of the God-Man makes it impossible for Him to play a subordinate and secondary role in God's plan, which would have been the case had the Incarnation been designed exclusively for the sake of man and his restoration to previous grace. If we wish to evaluate the present mystery at its face value, we should not begin with a consideration of purposes that lie outside it, such as would designate the Incarnation as something required by creatures. We must rather rise above the natural order of things, even above the order of grace as considered in itself, and find the true motivation of the Incarnation in God Himself. In this manner the Incarnation is the basis of its own proper order to which the orders of nature and grace are completely subordinated and in

which the latter are totally absorbed by the immeasurable power, wisdom, and love of God.

Grace, as it originally appeared in Adam, was the vital expression of God's desire to establish between Himself and His creature a mutual and supernatural relationship which accentuated and excelled their natural relationship in splendor and intimacy. For this reason God provided Adam with a higher aptitude to share in God's nature as His adopted child. Incidentally this new relationship of Creator and creature, being highly beneficial to man, also meant added, although extrinsic glory to God. Outstanding as this new and supernatural status of the first creature appeared in man, it was not infinite, any more than the glorification of God was infinite. It concerned an external and accidental manifestation of God, projected into the outer world, as a feeble imitation of the interior communication which takes place in God, and a faint reflection of God's internal glory. As such it had a real foundation in God, but not in man. This deficiency in man could only be remedied by the Incarnation. By means of the hypostatic union the human and the divine could be united in such a way that the bearer of a human nature, in this instance Jesus Christ, would be simultaneously the bearer of God's divine nature and essence. In this manner the interior communication of God's nature and essence could be projected and continued outside Himself in all infinity, as likewise the glorification of God would become of infinite value. Mere creatures, being finite in nature, can honor God only in a finite way. Creatures endowed with simple grace, as was the case with our first parents, could honor God far more perfectly with the homage of adopted chil-

dren. But only the Son, identical with the Father in nature, is able to honor and glorify God in His entire magnitude. He alone, as the Father's essential Word, expresses the entire majesty of the Father, manifesting the Father to the outer world as His substantial image. He alone can return the Father's infinite love in an infinite manner. It is further to be noted that, if God was to be thus infinitely glorified from without, the inner Word of God was to represent the entire created universe. For this reason He did not assume the purely spiritual nature of the angels, but a human nature in which the totality of all created nature is joined. Being composed of body and soul, man is a microcosm, a world in miniature, a summary of matter and spirit, the center of all visible creation which forms, so to speak, the nexus, the point of contact between spiritual and bodily substances. By His union with humanity the Son of God admits both spiritual and material nature to participate in His divinity. Although He thus passes over the angels, He does not exclude them, since their nature is in a sense comprised and represented in the spiritual element of human nature.

At this juncture it is essential to recall and emphasize that all creatures together constitute an immense unit to which the God-Man belongs by virtue of His created nature, or, as St. Paul puts it, He is at once "the image of the invisible God and the firstborn of every creature" (Col. 1:15). Christ is the head of all creation and of the human race in particular, because as God He is not only the Creator of the race, but as God-Man He took the race unto Himself by His entrance into it, uniting it to His divine person, and making it His own. Our Lord did not

found the human race in its natural unity. This Adam did. As the supernatural in general presupposes the natural, so the supernatural head of the race supposes the existence of a natural head as a preliminary condition. But the Son of God, exerting the infinite attractive force of His divine person, first took His own flesh unto Himself and with it "all flesh," since the entire race is a solidary unit. If one part of it enters into union with the person of the Word, the whole is elevated and taken up into Him. This mystery of our incorporation in Jesus Christ is the secret of our vocation, the glory of our calling, the touchstone of our spiritual life. Through the miracle of His personal union with the Godhead, Christ has become the substantial and real bond which united the most diverse opposites of Divinity and humanity. Thus is abated or rather obliterated the immeasurable chasm which separated man from God, be it on account of the creature's natural lowness, or on account of his sin. This also explains the intrinsic purpose of the Incarnation, which is twofold. First, a substantial union of Father and Son is effected, not only in the interior of God's bosom, but also in the outer world, with man's participation in the divine filiation as an essential feature. Second, infinite glory and praise of God has been derived from this union and is established for time and eternity. This is the eternal plan of the Father, of which St. Paul speaks in his letter to the Ephesians, which was realized in His Son. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing on high in Christ. Even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish in His sight in love. He pre-

destined us to be adopted through Jesus Christ as His sons, according to the purpose of His will, unto the praise of the glory of His grace, with which He has favored us in His beloved Son" (Eph. 1:3-6). Having thus established the intrinsic and twofold purpose of the Incarnation, the Apostle gives further thought to the twofold effect of the same mystery. "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the remission of sins, according to the riches of His grace. This grace has abounded beyond measure in us in all wisdom and prudence, so that He may make known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure. And this His good pleasure He purposed in Him to be dispensed in the fullness of the times: to re-establish all things in Christ, both those in the heavens and those on the earth" (Eph. 1:7-10). In the strength of this text it becomes eminently evident that the effect of this sublime union of God with His creature, which we call the Incarnation, was not primarily the restoration of a unity that was destroyed by sin. The remission of sin was indeed one grace. But God's grace has abounded beyond measure to the effect that henceforth we enjoy a superabundance of grace over and above the grace of restoration to God's friendship. The Council of Trent is very explicit in this regard when it states that our justification in Christ includes not only a remission of sin, but also a sanctification and renovation of the interior man by the voluntary acceptance of grace, by which man transfers from his state of injustice to a state of justification, changing enmity into friendship, in order that, justified by God's grace, he may be heir in the hope of life everlasting (Sess. VI, c. 7). St. Chrysostom goes into great detail explaining the

abundance of grace which came our way together with redemption.

We did not receive merely so much grace as was needed to do away with sin, but much more. We have been freed from punishment, and have put off all iniquity, and have been regenerated from above and, leaving the old man in the grave, have risen. We have been redeemed and sanctified and admitted to adoption. Moreover, we have been justified, have been made brothers of the only-begotten and coheirs with Him, have been fashioned into one body with Him, are accounted members of His flesh, and have been joined to Him no less closely than the body is joined to the head. All these blessings Paul calls an abundance of grace, for we have not merely received a medicine that is capable of healing our wounds, but in addition health, beauty, honor, glory, and dignities that vastly surpass our previous condition.³

In respect to the creature, Christ's atonement was rather a prerequisite which augured a new and supernatural union with God through union with God's natural Son. The payment in full of man's debt at the price of our Lord's blood puts man in a position far above his former state of guilt, far above man's estate before the fall, for he has received not simply readoption into the divine family, but he has been afforded a fresh start, a permanent and infallible claim on a volume of grace which far exceeds the measure granted to Adam. Formerly grace reached man from without and in a limited fashion, since grace is regulated by the capacity of man's receiving power. When this power increased, when grace became a participation in the

³ Migne, PG, LX, 477.

unlimited grace which Christ received as God-Man, it no longer trickled down upon man's earthly nature like a heavenly dew, but became a great river flowing from the Father as its source into the Son, and through the Son into the human race. It is the veritable torrent of grace that our Lord referred to, speaking to the Samaritan woman: "Who drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him shall become in him like a fountain of water, springing up unto life everlasting" (John 4:13-14). Henceforth and through the merits of Jesus Christ the charity of God is poured forth into our hearts, or, as St. Paul expresses it: "God who is rich in mercy, by reason of His very great love wherewith He has loved us even when we were dead by reason of our sins, brought us to life together with Christ, and raised us up together, and seated us in heaven in Christ Jesus, that He might show in the ages to come the overflowing riches of His grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:4-7). By simple grace, such as Adam enjoyed, man was in possession of a real but limited fellowship with God; but a complete and full fellowship of life, which draws life from the very bosom of divine life, as expressed in the Son, was only possible through the Incarnation. Since we have become the beneficiaries and the participants of Christ's own life in God, we are, as St. Peter expresses it, a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people, that we may proclaim the perfections of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9). In the face of these considerations, we accept that the effacement of sin must be regarded as a subordinate objective of both the Incarnation and Redemp-

tion, and, since God can permit evil only in view of a greater good derived from it, sin must be considered not so much as the cause of these two mysteries but rather as an occasion which God awaited and foresaw from all eternity to manifest His love for man in so astounding a manner.

The question is raised by theologians whether Christ would have become man if Adam had not sinned. St. Thomas, who at one place seems to favor the negative solution of the question,⁴ in other passages suggests many reasons for the Incarnation which are totally independent of sin and the fall. When, for instance, the Angelic Doctor points out that the Incarnation adapts man in an admirable and singular manner to the pursuit of his supernatural end; when he recalls that a participation in the knowledge proper to God postulates a teacher no other than God Himself; when he declares that the intimate love for God, by which we are to tend to supernatural union with Him, cannot be better roused and inflamed than by the love which God Himself displays most perfectly by assuming our nature and wishing to become our brother in the flesh, he brings to the fore reasons which exclusively deal with the perfection of the supernatural order of grace.⁵ In reality and in the concrete the Incarnation is usually treated in connection with the fall, but undoubtedly in such wise as to bring out the fact that God has associated the permission of the fall with the decree of the Incarnation.

To get a deeper insight into the question at hand, we should remember that the fundamental meaning of sacri-

⁴ *Summa Theologica*, III, q. 1, a. 3.

⁵ *Summa contra Gentiles* (Benziger Brothers: New York, 1925), Bk. IV, chap. LIV.

fice, which applies also to Christ's sacrifice on the cross, is not primarily propitiatory nor impetratory. The basic significance of sacrifice points rather at supreme worship, and its essence is most likely to be discovered in the offering of a gift as a token of respect. Besides being a visible proof of man's respect, the gift also signifies an acknowledgment that all things are God's. As such, the object was partially or totally destroyed, implying the notion that it was returned to God from whom it came. From time immemorial, man has offered such symbolic sacrifices to substitute for the one gift which is really comprehensive and entirely complete, the sacrifice of one's own life. But aside from the fact that such sacrifice is forbidden by God's positive law, it must be rejected on the ground that it is not suitable to human nature. The Apostle exhorts the brethren to present their bodies as a sacrifice, living, holy, and pleasing to God (Rom. 12:1), but a living sacrifice does not allow of the actual separation of body and soul, which means death in a human being. Our Lord explained: God is not the God of the dead, but of the living (Matt. 22:33). In Christ this was different. Because of the omnipotence of His person, our Lord had the power to lay down His life, and the power to take it up again, and in the resumption of His body to transfigure it with the glory of life eternal, which is His by nature. Sacred Scripture as well as the Fathers view the sacrifice of our Lord almost explicitly as a propitiatory offering, mostly because of the good which we derive from it. However, it is not the happiness of the creature, but the glory of God which is the supreme end of the service of God. Evidently the sacrifice of Christ is directed to the reconciliation and pardon of the creature,

but this does not prevent it from being a real sacrifice in its own right, decreed primarily for the glorification of God. God's dominion over us is not determined by our sins, but by our nothingness in comparison with Him. Consequently, we could attest our submission to Him by means of a sacrifice in which the victim is destroyed, even if we were wholly sinless. In like manner, Christ as the God-Man and the legal representative of mankind could have made a sacrifice of His own self in order to give supreme honor and glorification to God in His own name and instead of the whole of humanity, even if man had not sinned. Such a sacrifice would have been entirely proper since in Christ and with Christ this was the only adequate and perfect act of divine worship possible to mankind. Explained in this manner, Father Scheeben attests, the eternal decree by which God sent His Son into the world does not lose any of its sublimity. It sooner is infinitely enhanced. As a matter of fact, the propitiatory and reconciliatory character of Christ's sacrifice cannot be fully appraised unless due respect is paid to the primary and fundamental demand of sacrifice, which concentrates on the basic duty of doing justice and giving infinite praise to God.⁶

In addition, the point must be stressed that Christ's sacrifice is not purely personal, but also truly sacerdotal, in the sense that Christ offered His sacrifice as the representative of the human race. It is from the midst of that race that He took His body and blood. Consequently the body and blood which He immolated was at the same time our

⁶ For the mediatory function of the God-Man, see *The Mysteries of Christianity*, pp. 405ff.

body and blood. Therefore, it was not only Christ who sacrificed His own self to His heavenly Father, but in Him the whole human race was offered and dedicated to God as the pledge of an infinite worship. Christ's sacrifice, which paid first of all for our sinful deficiencies, is at the same time the real purchase money for all the supernatural goods by which man becomes like to the God-Man and is consecrated as a sacrifice to God in Jesus Christ. It bought for man the grace by which he is sanctified as a victim. By it he has received the power to conquer death in all its forms, so as to be able to live to God unrestrictedly. Death to oneself and the transition to a life in and for God represents the ideal of Christian sacrifice. It is the true and full life of man and a fitting prelude to bodily death which, after the example and in union with Christ's death, will not lack in our respect the essential constituent of expiation, but the element of praise and thanksgiving will prevail, since it marks the final step to transfiguration by the power of God's glory, leading man into the very bosom of God.

Such is the effect of God's grace, which twists like a golden thread through the entire fabric of life. It began at baptism when this life of grace became our undisputed domain and made us in some mysterious way participants of the divine nature in Jesus Christ. Supernatural faith, hope, and charity were infused into our souls together with the moral virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance to fit us for this life of Jesus within us. Being thus equipped with the fundamentals of the life of grace and having received the proximate power to elicit supernatural acts, we are further endowed with the gifts of the

Holy Spirit in order to perfect and facilitate the exercise of the virtues and make them function in the manner of a truly second nature. Meanwhile we continue to feel a constant need of God's direct concurrence to make our new and supernatural organism operate properly and without interference from human nature. This help is given by means of actual grace, which is defined as the needed impulse which sets our supernatural faculties to work, and which is necessary for the performance of each and every supernatural act. Thus, when there is question of returning to God after the soul has lost Him by mortal sin, grace is needed to perform such preliminary acts of faith, hope, love, and sorrow. As previously mentioned, such a grace is even needed for the desire of believing, which is the first step and the very starting point of supernatural faith. Our perseverance in doing good, even to the hour of death, is likewise the work of actual grace. In fact, the daily warfare with temptations, which assail every soul with regularity and persistence, could not be waged without the direct help of God. For this reason, our Lord warned His Apostles to watch and pray, lest they enter into temptation (Matt. 26:41). Finally, the constant response to grace and the perseverance therein could not be accomplished without the assistance of grace, since He who has begun a good work in us must bring it to perfection. What else is all this but a humble recognition of the necessity of prayer? Considering our human weakness and frailty and the fact that we so easily tire of God and seek diversion elsewhere, it is no surprise that our Lord insisted on a special petition in the *Our Father* to assure this life of sanctifying grace in our souls and further its healthy growth. This prayer

becomes even more imperative for those who are satisfied with mediocrity in the service of God, even though they are hardly content with anything short of perfection when it concerns earthly endeavor. Here we meet with that vast army of good souls, as Bishop Sheen calls them, who indeed are thirsty, but fear to ask God for a drink, lest He pour it to them from a chalice. Let such persons take heart, and recite this petition frequently. If repeated often enough and with candor, it will prove effective and afford them the courage to clear the last hurdles which stand between them and God, obstructing their complete surrender to a full life of sanctifying grace.

God's reign in us is forever a reign of love. He will not take dominion by means of force or in spite of us. Normally, this sway of God's rule in the kingdom of our hearts means a constant and cheerful cooperation with grace. There is, indeed, operating grace, such as is at work in the sacraments where God does all the acting. But the majority of graces that come our way during life are cooperating graces, graces where God acts in and together with us, that is, with the free cooperation of our will. Even in the sacraments God does not exclude this cooperation, inasmuch as sacraments are ineffective when we place obstacles to the flow of grace. But once given our willingness to cooperate, there is not much to fear. If it is ignorance we dread or lack of knowledge regarding God's inscrutable ways, sanctifying grace makes us participants of God's wisdom, knowledge, and understanding. If it is lack of prudence, fortitude, or temperance, the divinely infused virtues are there at our bidding. If we fear the daily onslaught of the devil, the world, and the flesh, actual

graces make us partake of God's own power and strength. In fact we need never fear, not even in the face of our innate languor and weakness, for God's grace is sufficient at all time, and strength is made perfect in weakness (2 Cor. 12:9).

Finally, this life of grace is to prepare us for the life of glory. Actually, grace is more than a preparation; it is the beginning of glory, for it is a true and formal participation in the life of God. We would not be seeking God, if we had not already found Him. Thus we wind our way through life with happiness strewn around us and a smile in our hearts, for we are on the road to heaven and God is leading the way.

Thy Will Be Done

THE preceding chapter advanced the opportunity to evaluate our Lord and Savior as a supplement to Adam inasmuch as He repaired the inestimable havoc wrought by our first parent in both himself and the human race; or again as a complement, who, as the natural Son of God, raised humanity above its former self and gave men the power and the formal right to become children of God in a new and fuller sense. While we endeavored to show that the complementary function supersedes the former because of its higher and more comprehensive nature, still the fact remains that God did demand an adequate satisfaction for sin. Although the effacement of sin is thus represented as a subordinate objective of the Incarnation, or rather as the occasion which God utilized to manifest His ineffable love for man, the Incarnation as such cannot be separated from the redemption, since a full payment of the guilty debt by the human race could not be effected except through the nativity of the God-Man, who as man could suffer and die, and who as God could add to His supreme sacrifice the infinite value of expiation. For this reason also there is a definite and necessary con-

nexion between the Incarnation and original sin, one which becomes increasingly important when we view the connective association of sin in general and of original sin in particular with the present petition.

Sin violates the harmony and order established and decreed by God. It is an act of rebellion on the part of the creature who refuses due subjection and reverence to God's supreme and infinite majesty. Sin may be found first of all in the natural order, for there exists in every creature a natural ability and an inborn aspiration toward good in general and toward the esteem and love of the supreme Good in particular. When the creature thus turns his mind and will against God and decides not to serve, he contradicts his nature and degenerates his innate goodness and justice. When man is raised to the supernatural order, the disparity between service and sin becomes even more evident. Having been made the participant of a new principle of life, which is contained in God's own nature, man's inclination toward God and the fulfillment of His law is no longer regulated by servile fear, but by a filial and divine love, which theologians call charity. Grievous sin is now marked with a new stigma of malice. It not only runs counter of nature, but contradicts the very goodness and justice of God. It rejects divine sanctity and effectively excludes it from the soul.

When examining the multitude of creatures that came forth from the hand of God in the morning of creation, we find that all were created good by nature. All remained in their original state till this day, except man who strayed from the divinely delinated course and went his way. Man's greatest glory is found in the fact that he is made

after God's own image and likeness to the extent that he is endowed with reason and free will. However great a boon this is, it may be easily turned into a marked disadvantage, for it lies within man's power to abuse the privilege and defy God, be it even unto his own destruction. By abusing this inborn advantage and turning it into license, one disrupts the established order of nature and exposes oneself to the punishments which nature itself metes out. Thus, if going against God's will is the prime reason of human misery, to live according to God's will contains the wholesome secret of happiness, and is the sole corrective for the condition of wretchedness in which Adam plunged the human race by his act of disobedience.

In the natural order, one may sin against God and arrest the development of his natural tendency toward good. One may even dull the power of natural conscience so that its voice becomes almost inaudible. But man will never be able to annihilate it altogether, because he is unable to destroy his nature. In the supernatural order matters are quite different and far more disastrous. As a supernatural endowment of nature, sanctity does not necessarily belong to nature. By a gravely sinful act, this disposition and aptitude for supernatural good—which sanctifying grace implies—is not just weakened and stunned in its growth; it is completely destroyed, torn out along with its root. Accordingly grievous sin is mortal sin, because it eradicates and kills the habit of theological love, even though the other infused virtues of faith and hope may remain. Thus grievous sin is spiritual suicide, incomparably more evil and frightful than when a man takes his mortal life, for the very reason that his soul will live on

regardless, but henceforth in an unnatural state of aversion from what he was created to love, of despising supernatural values which he was made to cherish. In this manner the soul not only rejects God, but severs himself from God so effectively that, unless he repents, sin will survive in the soul habitually: his heart will become hardened and turn to hatred, even as his former state was one of habitual grace and friendship. All this is on the part of the sinner. On the part of God, the effect of mortal sin is even more disturbing. Here its intrinsic malice must be found in the fact that sin attacks God in His most intimate relation with the creature, and destroys the operation of grace. This internal operation of God within the soul is fashioned after God's own internal operation. Grievous sin annihilates this resemblance and leaves the soul bereft of a supernatural relationship which it ought to have in imitation and participation of God's essential life. As such, it constitutes the nearest approach to deicide that human conduct can realize, for it destroys God in the creature.

To receive an ever clearer picture of the true character of sin, one must go back to its origin and realize that each sin demonstrates a deformity of the will. Sin always involves an act of the will; and when we remember that, even in the natural order, the soul finds in itself a tendency and disposition to good, that the Creator has given man the innate power of determining himself in favor of God, we understand that man cannot commit a sinful act unless he first withdraws from this influence. When this is true of the natural order, it is even more evident in the supernatural order of grace. Here the supernatural inclination of man to unite himself to God in will and aspiration is derived

directly from God, in the sense that it is a result of one's participation in divine goodness and holiness. Grace has a tendency to make the creature as sinless as God Himself. This is proved by the fact that, when grace has bloomed into glory, sin has become entirely extraneous to man; separation from God is absolutely unimaginable and eternally impossible. St. John remarks that "whoever is born of God does not commit sin; because His seed abides in him and he cannot sin, because he is born of God" (1 John 3:9). While this statement cannot be categorically accepted in the sense that St. John wishes to imply that the just is impeccable and cannot commit sin at any event, he does want to make it clear that the seed of God, which is holiness and grace, will prevent man from committing sin as long as grace abides in the soil of the soul, and is not forcibly trodden under foot or effectively exterminated. This man does when his will decides against God and repudiates actual grace, when he struggles free from the bosom of God and violently cuts loose from the bonds of charity with which he was bound. It may be better to say that, since grace is repudiated, there is no reason on the part of God to preserve it against the sinner's desire. When man disowns God, what does there remain but that God withdraw from the soul, taking with Him the very principle of supernatural life as a punishment?

How can we account for the fact that man rejects actual grace, and thus exposes himself to the forfeiture of habitual grace? Is it because he does not appreciate his essential state of dependence and the necessity of turning to God in order to find needed help and guidance in time of temptation? Our position in supernatural life is such that it

places us entirely outside the natural scope of values when it concerns matters spiritual, even to the extent that—as St. Paul remarks—“we are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything, as from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God” (2 Cor. 3:5). The things we are asked to do in spiritual life, the duties we are expected to perform, are not only supernatural, but they are superhuman, in the sense that they require and receive God’s divine and direct assistance at any time. It is this very dependence which should impel the creature to turn to God continually, to surrender to God unconditionally, and to thank Him without intermission for the privilege that He has taken us out of our own keeping and treats us as beloved children, who are in constant need of His help. But strangely enough, it is just this dependence, this lasting need to seek God’s assistance, which becomes the point of departure when the creature begins to feel mortified at the thought that the supernatural liberty of God’s children is after all a restricted liberty, one which leaves no room for personal preferences or arbitrary measures. When God demonstrates incessantly that His ways are not our ways, that His judgments are conceived from eternity and invariably carried out in time, that the plans of God do not allow of compromise, it may create the impression that God is a dictatorial God, that His decisions are absolute, imperious, and peremptory. Thus the state of dependence becomes a harsh and oppressive yoke. Submission assumes the form of resentment against an established and irrevocable order. Actual revolt against God and His divine economy of grace at this stage, becomes almost inevitable. This usual pattern is clearly evinced in the sin of Adam and Eve. When the tempter addressed

Eve in the Garden of Eden and broached the question, "Why has God commanded you that you should not eat of any tree of the Garden?" (Gen. 3:1), his evident purpose was to make God appear an arbitrary judge, unable or unwilling to appreciate a legitimate desire of His creature. When Satan further questioned God's sincerity in giving the command, lest their eyes be opened and they shall be as Gods, knowing good and evil, Eve saw "that the tree was good to eat, and fair to the eyes, and delightful to behold: and she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave to her husband who did eat" (Gen. 3:6). We cannot accept that the sensible attraction which Eve experienced for the fruit was the beginning of her sin. Owing to the gift of integrity which Eve enjoyed at the time, there could be no question of her lower tendencies giving guidance to her reason and will. When she reached for the fruit, the sin was already accomplished in her heart, since she desired to be like to God in her own right, rather than through the ministration of grace. Hers was a sin of pride, which aimed at reaching God's knowledge of good and evil in her own petty and guilty way by means of disobedience to God's explicit command. That her transgression was duly premeditated is beyond doubt, for her understanding was clear and in no way beclouded. Eve walked into Satan's trap deliberately and fell from the dazzling heights to which God had raised her, because she refused the necessary grace which a loving Father affords in every temptation, as it is written: "No evil shall happen to him that fears the Lord, but in temptation God will keep him" (Ecclus. 33:1). Or in the words of St. Paul: "God is faithful and will not permit you to be tempted beyond

your strength, but with the temptation will also give you a way out that you may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. 10:13). Holy Scripture indicates that Eve did not delay inducing Adam to eat of the fruit, undoubtedly laying before him the same motives which had led her to fall. According to the Apostle, there was an even greater degree of culpability on the part of Adam, because his was a greater amount of freedom, since he was not deceived by Satan as Eve was (1 Tim. 2:14).

It may be relevant to draw a parallel between the sin of Adam and Eve, and the sin of the fallen angels. That the sin of our first parents was basically a sin of pride was well indicated by Satan's suggestion, that they would be "as Gods." Applying the spiritual sense of Holy Scripture in the respective places, St. Thomas suggests that the sin of the angels was of an identical variety. Their sin must have been spiritual from the beginning because of their spiritual nature, and took on the malice of pride because of its reference to their necessary and eternal destiny. These are the words of the Angelic Doctor:

A spiritual nature cannot be affected by such pleasures as pertain to bodies, but only by such as can be found in spiritual beings, because nothing is affected except with regard to something which is in some way suited to its nature. But there can be no sin when anyone is incited to a good of the spiritual order, unless in such affection the rule of the superior be not kept. Such is precisely the sin of pride—not to be subject to a superior where subjection is due. Consequently the first sin of the angel can be none other than pride.¹

¹ *Summa Theologica*, Ia, q. 63, a. 2.

No longer satisfied with sheer grace and the simple participation in the divine nature which grace augurs, the angel coveted equality with God in glory and splendor. He wished to ascend above the heights of the clouds and exalt his throne above the stars of God; he desired to be like the Most High, not with a similarity of limited resemblance, but with one of identity (Cf. Is. 14:13–14; Ezech. Chapter 28). Still there is a vast difference in the malice involved, because of the immense disparity of the two respective natures of angel and man. Adam and Eve were not in a position to know as clearly and lucidly the full bearing of their sin as were the angels. Nor was their will as energetic and powerful. Being pure spirits, the angels are closer to God in their very nature, which makes of necessity for connatural knowledge. Likewise their will is of superior quality, as says St. Thomas: "Wherever there is intellect, there is free choice. So there is free choice in the angels, and in a higher degree of perfection than in man."² Since there was no outside, subversive influence, as was the case with Adam and Eve, their guilty perversion was motivated solely by their free choice.

We may further inquire into the incidental cause which occasioned their particular sin. Here we meet with a serious theological opinion which proposes that a revelation was made to the angels about the future incarnation of the Son of God. Although falling outside the scope of strict revelation, this opinion cannot be lightly dismissed because of its intrinsic value. It finds its origin and foundation in the well-known text of St. Paul, extolling the pre-eminence of Christ.

² *Ibid.*, Ia, q. 59, a. 3.

He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature. For in Him were created all things in the heavens and on the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether Thrones, or Dominations, or Principalities, or Powers. All things have been created through and unto Him, and He is before all creatures, and in Him all things hold together (Col. 1:15-17).

In case such a disclosure was made to the angels, it would have suggested to their mind a preferment of the human race, inasmuch as God selected human nature in preference to the angelic nature to effect a hypostatic union with the Word of God. It would also imply as a necessary consequence that, in spite of their sublime rank and dignity in the supernatural order, they would be called upon to acknowledge, reverence, and adore the bearer of that hypostatic union, who would be God indeed, but man also. This exposition seems to afford a very plausible explanation of the angels' fall, particularly in view of the opinion of several of the Fathers who propose envy of men as the proximate occasion of their revolt and defection. St. Thomas takes note of this opinion, but considers it a necessary consequence of their first sin, when he says: "After the sin of pride there followed the sin of envy in the sinning angel, whereby he grieved over man's good, and also over the divine excellence, according as against the devil's will God makes use of man for the divine glory."³ This supposition also explains the infernal hatred of the fallen angels for God in general and for the God-Man in particular, which would have instigated Lucifer, as Holy Scrip-

³ *Ibid.*, Ia, q. 63, a. 2.

ture indicates, to put up a kingdom of his own against the kingdom of Christ, and to extend this kingdom over the earth in an effort to entice men to pay homage to him instead of to the Lord's Anointed. It would finally account for the frightful malice of the blackest of all crimes by which Satan and his minions contrived to destroy the Son of Man, using the Jews as their ready tools and, after having failed in their purpose, turn to the members of His mystical body, hounding them with diabolical frenzy in order to destroy Christ's effective image in the souls of men. Even though all this is but a theorem, still the fact remains that the sin of the fallen angels has resulted in an established kingdom of Satan on earth, the *mystery of iniquity*, of which the Apostle speaks (2 Thess. 2:7), representing the persistent effort of the devil in the midst of the human race to make the mystery of the Incarnation a frightful unreality. But, whereas this persistent effort of the devil in our respect remains indirect and casual, the sin of Adam and Eve had a direct and necessary effect on the human race and is of greater concern to us, since it destroyed the personal sanctity which should have been ours by heritage. Let us explain this in somewhat greater detail.

The concept of original sin can be clearly and definitely formulated only in the light of original justice, forfeited by Adam and Eve by their sinful transgression. What does theology understand by the term *original justice*? Does it refer explicitly to the supernatural state of justice and holiness which God imparted to Adam and Eve over and above their natural privileges, making them spiritual children of God and participants of His own nature? In other words: is it called original justice because it existed in our first

parents prior to the fall? By no means. Such justice should be called personal justice rather than original. It is called original justice because it was produced in Adam and Eve simultaneously with human nature, and was to be propagated along with nature. This implies that Adam was destined by divine decree to transmit to his progeny not only a natural existence but a supernatural existence as well, and both by means of natural propagation. Adam's state of justice and holiness was both personal and transferable, like a man who receives a treasure which he may leave to his children as a legal inheritance. Because the privilege of sanctity was given to Adam in this manner, it belonged essentially to the whole of nature and to the entire human race. This transmission of grace exhibits somewhat the same characteristics as the transmission of nobility among men, with this difference that the latter is hereditary by human right, while the former was designed to be hereditary by divine law and regulation.

Turning to original sin, we find that the same terms which define original justice, define original sin. Since original justice was to have been transmitted to all of Adam's descendants by God's decree, its culpable loss was also transmitted to all of necessity. The whole race stands before God as a moral body, which in Adam, its head, rejected and lost supernatural justice. As a physical act, the sin belonged to Adam alone. Inasmuch as the act resulted in a habitual and censurable deformity of the race, it is imputed to all. Our sinfulness before God thus rests exclusively on the culpability of this habitual deformity in the race, since the race is held responsible for losing the state of supernatural justice which it should have pre-

served, but lost, owing to the fault of its head. Nor is it primarily a privation of a perfection which should have been present. The new condition of man constitutes first and foremost a subversion of the supernatural order established by God. Man no longer conforms to God's original idea, for which the race as such is held accountable. It must be especially emphasized that this specific privilege which Adam was to transmit in connection with nature, was his by grace. Adam could never have been the principle of the justice of his descendants by reason of his own justice, in the way that he was the principle of their nature. In generation, man transmits precisely that which is his by nature, not what is his by grace. It was this very privilege of transmitting grace in connection with nature, which made the hereditary transmission of sin possible, once this salutary privilege was debauched by sin. Henceforth Adam continues to transmit his nature, no longer in its glorious state of supernatural transformation, but in the abject condition of deformity and spiritual malformation. Since this hereditary guilt is juridical rather than moral in respect to the descendants, God does not punish the latter over and above their own personal guilt. This He does by withdrawing only those goods which exceed the natural order. If, therefore, a child dies without baptism and without personal guilt, he will not be taken up into God's bosom, nor enjoy the beatific vision, but his future state will be one of sheer beatitude and natural contentment.

To understand the full import of the supernatural privileges lost by our first parents in behalf of themselves and posterity, we must view the state of original justice in its component parts. Original justice in Adam and Eve con-

sisted of sanctity and integrity. The state of sanctity or habitual grace was designed to make them children of God. Providing them with a supernatural attachment to God as to their ultimate end, it turned their soul to Him habitually and thus effected a complete and supernatural orientation. Integrity, on the other hand, consisted in a certain condition of the faculties of the soul, which detached them from creatures. Made up of three related privileges, it provided them with infused knowledge, control of the passions, and immortality. These privileges aimed to remove all obstacles to a serene and God-centered life, prevented an otherwise unavoidable dissonance of higher and lower faculties, and furnished our first parents with a more or less worthy and connatural environment for the preservation of habitual grace. Thus grace was at once the purpose for which integrity was given and the source from which it sprang, and the two gifts, although entirely distinct from each other and capable of separate existence, were so closely related that they mutually conditioned and complemented each other in the state of original justice. The very combination of these supernatural blessings was so intense, so entirely above human understanding and so mysterious, that even Moses did not venture to reveal it in all its grandeur. As stated before, St. Augustine maintains that the story of Adam and Eve, related in Genesis, makes mention only of what was visible in original justice, namely, the perfect harmony and integrity of nature. About their supernatural consecration as children of God, the sacred writer preserved a discreet silence, since the sublime dignity which is the portion of God's adopted children was too deep to be understood by the people for whom he

wrote. When the will of our first parents decided to turn against God, it opposed the supernatural order in its entirety and effectively destroyed both sanctity and integrity.

Strange to say, the very same principle which made original sin hereditary for posterity, provided God with the means of restoring original justice to the race. If we wish to seek in the human race itself a true basis for the wonderful fellowship in grace which today exists in justified man, we shall no longer find it in Adam who transmitted sanctification by grace, but in the God-Man who transmits sanctification by nature. Assuming membership in the race, Jesus Christ became the new head of the race, sanctifying every man who enters into communion with Him through the saving waters of baptism, and giving him the right to become a child of God. As says the Apostle:

As from the offense of the one man the result was unto condemnation to all men, so from the justice of the One the result is unto justification of life to all men. For just as by the disobedience of the one man the many were constituted sinners, so also by the obedience of the One the many will be constituted just (Rom. 5:18-19).

Our new condition, brought about by the combined mysteries of Incarnation and Redemption, reinstated us into the state of habitual grace. But it did not return to us the privilege of integrity. As man is constituted now, actual sin finds its origin in man's defective knowledge of good. While a person's will is freely drawn toward rational good, his spiritual tendencies come in frequent conflict with his sensual desires. When sin is decided on, it is chosen because

of the good which man perceives in it. The fact that he can and does select sin—although sin in itself is a denial of good—shows the fallacy of his judgment. This error of judgment is further emphasized by the carnal inclination of man's nature which is no longer in perfect harmony with the spirit. As a consequence of Adam's fall, man can no longer deprive his sense faculties of all spontaneous movements and appetites. Since the latter are stimulated by their own proper objects—which are sensible things and goods—it is plainly understandable that the lower faculties, unless severely disciplined, will demand and often receive their rights in their own proper field.

But not all our mistakes find their origin in defective knowledge of good, nor in the lowly inclinations of nature. As stated before, Eve had no defective knowledge, nor was her sin caused by a sensible craving for the fruit. Hers was a sin of pride, as the devil's suggestion clearly indicates, "You shall be as Gods, knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3:5). Every sin is a revolt against the established order of God, and a product of pride. Freedom consists in the inborn right and obligation to choose freely what is good. But man desires to be free with an absolute freedom, independent even of God's dominion, and chooses what is wrong. In order to bring our lower tendencies once again into subjection to reason and will and make them serve, God makes use of actual grace, merited for us by Jesus Christ. Before the fall, we could differentiate between the grace which sanctified and deified man in spirit, bringing him in supernatural union with God, and the grace which spiritualized his corporal nature. In our instance, the first grace must perform the entire operation of spiritualizing

the person. To replace the gift of integrity, and still obtain the same effect, sanctifying grace had to be intensified. This God brought about by making sanctifying grace not just a participation in the divine nature, which grace already was, but a specific participation in the divine nature of Jesus Christ. This divine nature of our Lord, being hypostatically united with His human nature, not only deified His own human nature, but gave us a share in this deifying process as well, with the result that our human nature, although lacking the gift of integrity, should be and is stronger spiritually than was Adam's human nature, even in its primal state of original justice. What strengthened Adam's nature by a free gift of God and, so to speak, from the outside, comes to us from the inside and more especially from our incorporation in Jesus Christ. Hence when we reject grace and turn against God, our personal guilt is also intensified, precisely because our bodies are members of Christ (1 Cor. 6:15). Or, as St. Paul says: "How much worse punishments do you think he deserves who has trodden under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant through which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?" (Heb. 10:29).

Father Scheeben poses a difficulty, advanced by modern times, which questions the meritorious character of Christ's sacrifice, while balancing the sin of Adam and Eve, because His will had no freedom of choice, as our first parents had.⁴ Let us restate the fundamental fact that free will is a privilege which does not give us the right to do what we want indiscriminately. It rather furnishes us with

⁴ *The Mysteries of Christianity*, pp. 447ff.

a free choice of action between two alternatives which are both equally good. Freedom to choose between good and evil is an aberration of the true notion of liberty. Its proper name is lawlessness. Were we to understand liberty in this sense, there would be no freedom in God, since His will is essentially determined by what is good. The same must be said of our Lord Jesus Christ. But the fact of the matter is that the God-Man did not have to undergo such a discriminating trial between good and evil in order to counterbalance the failure of Adam's trial. His task was to restore God's violated honor and in the process recover true liberty for God's children. This objective required a free activity on the part of the God-Man, perfect liberty to direct His choice according to right reason and within the limits of equity. When we consider this freedom of Christ's will, or more directly the human freedom in the divine person of Christ, we find that He loved God of necessity and with a love that cannot be exceeded in a created nature. But He was not obliged to give expression to this love in any pre-determined manner. When St. Paul, quoting the prophet, speaks about the command of the Father which sent our Lord to the cross (Heb. 10:7), we must read this particular passage with a great deal of mental reserve. The extent of the Father's commitment concerned a free glorification of God and the redemption of the human race through His divine Son. This could have been effected by various means. In case a real obligation to excessive suffering existed, morally, legally, or otherwise, our Lord could have secured a release from it because of His exalted position as Son of God. Actually, because of Christ's unconditional right to a glorified body even while on earth, which would

have precluded suffering and death, the Father could not have exacted the same in strict obligation. Apart from the fact that, even as man, He could have demanded a commutation of sentence and have it changed into something more dignified, as God, He was absolutely superior to the command. If He wished to apply His freedom of choice regardless and in the manner He did, He must have done so for ulterior reasons and in order to secure for man a redemption which exceeds all limits of human understanding and can only be explained and measured by the depth of divine love.

In application to the present petition, we realize that our Lord's extreme example of divine love must serve as an incentive on the part of the creature to submit his will to the supreme will of God without reservation and in faithful imitation of Jesus Christ. In general lines, and without viewing the several nuances of the divine will in our respect, we divide the latter into the signified will of God and His will of good pleasure. The signified will of God concerns itself with commands and prohibitions, counsels and inspirations, all of which come to us directly. His will of good pleasure concerns the general management of the universe with God as the ruling principle, and comes to us indirectly. The former calls for obedience in the strict sense of the word. The latter demands obedience by way of acquiescence. Whatever God decrees, He carries out regardless and independent of our submission. What we can and ought to do is to accept such inevitable events and conform our will to His, not only because it is our duty to be resigned, but also because by resignation we turn into an occasion of merit what otherwise would be a matter of

dire necessity. To this twofold division some theologians add God's permissive will which, according to others, is already included in His will of good pleasure. It concerns incidents to which God cannot give His direct approval. Such is the case with sin. The latter He allows to happen, even giving His concurrence to the material act, because He refuses to interfere with any phase of man's free will. God's wisdom and power to derive good from evil furnishes us with the key to this enigma. Divine providence is in no way restricted, not even by our malice, because God can turn personal transgression into an occasion of grace and a novel instrument of sanctification. In view of such divine mercy, who would question the unqualified propriety on the part of the creature to search for the will of God incessantly and make it the sole norm of his conduct? By grace we are born of God and resemble God as children resemble their father. By a true participation in His divine nature, we are aided by His permanent presence, inspired with a longing for holiness that we may be acceptable and perfect in His sight. In this we receive guidance from the gift of counsel which provides us with prompt and right judgment, not by careful search of mind, but by way of supernatural intuition. To be possessed and governed by the Holy Spirit of God, and be conscious of His divine operations, is the beauty of our interior life and the crowning glory of grace. Decisions become easy when the Holy Spirit speaks and makes us understand what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Call it effective awareness of God's loving and immediate proximity, docility to the voice of the interior Master, abandonment to divine providence, basically it is the logical development

of a true Christian spirituality which searches for God and the ways of God in every circumstance of life.

The accomplishment of God's will being of such paramount importance, we cannot be satisfied with performing it perfunctorily and in a half-hearted, careless manner. For this reason, our Lord, after having taught us to say: Thy will be done, makes us add: on earth as it is in heaven. It seems hardly possible that God's will be respected, adored, and performed as perfectly on earth as the angels and saints do in heaven. Still this is the model which our Lord proposes for our imitation. It is well to remember that the value and merits of our supernatural works are not measured by what they are in themselves, but by their grade of conformity to God's holy will. That man attains to the highest degree of sanctity who descends deepest into the divine will. In fact, St. Teresa remarks that the sole concern of him who has entered into the way of prayer must be to strive courageously to do God's will. Herein lies whole and entire the highest perfection to which one can aspire.⁵

⁵ *The Interior Castle* (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1946), pp. 23-32.

*Give Us This Day Our
Daily Bread*

THE LORD'S PRAYER is divided into two parts. The first section, so far treated, deals with the indispensable means of assuring God's essential honor and glory, and concerns God directly, even though in a mere accidental and extrinsic manner. In orderly fashion we pass on to the secondary means, which pertain to God indirectly, and are designed to facilitate our arduous effort to reach God. Thus the fourth petition relates to our daily sustenance.

As a matter of common knowledge, poverty is a hindrance to both bodily and spiritual welfare. Says Bishop Bellord: "A saint could put up with it and utilize it. But its tendency on the normal man and woman is to hinder their well-being." Exclusive of extraordinary circumstances, we cannot expect God to perform a miracle in order to sustain us, as our Lord twice performed a miracle in the desert to feed the multitude. Normally we must obtain the necessities of life by the sweat of our brow, as said the Lord: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou return to the earth, out of which thou wast taken"

(Gen. 3:19). But far from degrading man, labor ennobles him, being at once a source of self-respect and a sign of character. St. Paul remarks: "If any man will not work, neither let him eat" (2 Thes. 3:10). The same Apostle took great pride in having provided for his own sustenance while preaching the Gospel. "You remember, brethren, our labor and toil. We worked night and day so as not to be a burden to any man while we preached to you the gospel of God" (1 Thes. 2:9).

In the state of original innocence, the needs of our first parents were few and well provided for by the fruit of the tree of life placed in the midst of Paradise. Our needs, however, are many and varied, and include the things, indispensable or useful, which preserve our bodily health and well-being. But they do not include the many artificial needs, such as are created by a world which considers labor a drudgery and luxuries a necessity. When someone labeled our present civilization a limitless multiplication of unnecessary necessities, he marked a truth of no little consequence. We simply refuse to be taken in by the high-pressure salesmanship of modern advertising which shows a deliberate intent to keep the customers unhappy. This aim is so effective that it leaves many of us currently in debt while we try to make back-payments on things we do not need and without which we would be a great deal happier. All this reminds one of the devil who took our Lord to a very high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, and said: "All these things will I give Thee, if Thou fall down and worship me" (Matt. 4:9). We are living in an atmosphere which is essentially pagan, and consequently unacceptable to the

true Catholic mind. Of necessity we absorb some of these pagan ideas, which complicate our spiritual reasoning. For one thing, we are too much taken up with external affairs. These could serve as a means to reach God, if we so willed it, but they easily become an end in themselves. We are indeed a cluttered generation. We could get along with far less than we have. We could be more intelligent with fewer books, healthier with less food, and happier with fewer things to look after. Father Faber was not far from the truth when he accused us of an exaggerated worldliness, which he defines as an immense number of allowable details issuing in an unallowable end. This is partly from the accumulation and partly from the hold the details have on our affections. Things which are not wrong in themselves become wrong when they stand between us and God, unspeakably wrong when they usurp God's place in our hearts. The Christian way of life involves an idea of frugality and moderation, two terms which are rapidly losing their charm and attraction, even though they are definitely implied in the Christian way of living. We demand for ourselves the right to live the simple life, such as Christ taught us, unhampered by the countless superfluities which put the cost of living beyond the reach of the common man.

Besides delineating our trust in divine providence to care for our material needs according to mode and measure, this petition expresses another desire of even greater consequence. The word *bread* in Sacred Scripture has many connotations. Corporal food is not the only, far less the principal thing we ask for by way of this request. If we stand in need of material nourishment to sustain the body,

our need of spiritual food is still more immanent. Here the words of our Lord are significant: "Not by bread alone does man live, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4).

The word of God comes to us in several ways, in various shapes and forms, as was indicated when we spoke of the signified will of God and His will of good pleasure. It comes to us especially by faith and grace, as says the Apostle, quoting the words of the Lord: "My just one lives by faith. But if he draws back, he will not please My soul" (Heb. 10:38). In keeping with the doctrine previously formulated, it is evident that God directs the soul by His interior word. The soul's sanctification much depends on a growing attentiveness to God's voice and a willing readiness to follow its secret inspiration. Says St. Thomas:

A man's faith may be described of being greater in a twofold manner. On the part of the intellect, because of its greater certitude and firmness; and on the part of the will, because of one's greater promptitude, devotion, and confidence. The reason is that faith results from the gift of grace, which is not equally in all.¹

Because of this distinction, theologians maintain that faith may grow either in extension, or in depth and intensity. When the scope of our supernatural knowledge is enlarged by careful and comprehensive study of revelation, we experience a growth in extension. Such operation is pre-eminently intellectual and normally connected with the grace of faith, even conveyed by this grace. When it precedes faith, the Holy Spirit opens the eyes of the mind

¹ *Summa Theologica*, IIa IIae, q. 5, a. 4.

and effects a firmer and a more cheerful acceptance. When it follows faith, the same Holy Spirit enlightens the intellect with increasing power and transforms a simple acceptance into a living faith by bringing the revealed objects into closer contact with the soul by a growing manifestation of themselves. The latter process also presages an increase of faith in depth and intensity. The supernatural light which was needed to display the revealed mysteries to their best advantage and to elevate reason to their level is now striking root in the soul, enabling man to assimilate divine knowledge and make it the norm of a supernatural life in God.

To bring supernatural and divine knowledge to perfection, one needs a deep purity of mind and a great simplicity of heart. In respect to the former, the Apostle informs us that "the sensual man does not perceive the things that are of the Spirit of God, for it is foolishness to him and he cannot understand, because it is examined spiritually" (1 Cor. 2:14). In respect to the latter, we have the words of our Lord Himself, who advises: "Unless you turn and become like little children, you will not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:3). Referring to both requisites, Father Scheeben remarks:

As we must become little in ourselves if we wish to be reborn of God, so we must enroll in God's school as infants, and must allow ourselves to be led into the depths of His mysteries clasping His hand, and guided by His light. Whoever refuses to become little in this way will not even reach what he is actually capable of reaching with his natural faculties.²

² *The Mysteries of Christianity*, p. 772.

Where a childlike spirit prevails, neither great intellectual culture nor a skilled human teacher is needed. For the Holy Spirit teaches us concerning all things, as says St. John: "As for you, let the anointing which you have received from Him, dwell in you, and you have no need that anyone teach you" (1 John 2:27). Grace often manifests its enlightening effect in those good and simple souls who never had occasion to read a theological treatise on the divine mysteries. Still they not infrequently grasp the mysteries of God more surely and clearly than the most learned philosophers and theologians. Their supernatural light does not in itself produce any abstractly formulated and organically integrated conception of said mysteries, as true science demands, but their concepts are truly intense and profound, due to the direct operation of the Holy Spirit. Humility and purity of heart in this connection are obviously not independent of grace. On the contrary, they are produced by the Holy Spirit, and by faith which is already operative. Faith has become productive in consequence of this divine inspiration. While the mysteries are thus drawn down from their transcendental remoteness to the closest and most intimate proximity with the soul, we endeavor to regulate our conduct in conformity with the same mysteries. No longer mere formulas nor empty words, they become the very principles of our supernatural existence; they guide and direct the life of the soul in practical confirmation of their existence. We do not need to emphasize that such interior manifestations of the divine mysteries can only retain their value in conjunction with faith and the objective criteria of external revelation. They will serve as additional proof and corroboration, but never as a substitute for revelation and faith.

In a beautiful chapter on the interior life,³ Father Garrigou-Lagrange probes the question whether it should be necessarily emphasized that we must consider God in the light of faith. Unfortunately, it seems only too necessary. We often consider God in the light of our prejudices, our human sentiments, our petty passions. It occurs repeatedly, even in prayer, that we listen to ourselves rather than to God, when we ascribe to the Lord our reflections, inspired by self-love. In hours of presumption, we are inclined to think that divine mercy is for us, divine justice for those who do not please us. In moments of discouragement, we doubt the love of God and His boundless mercy. How often do we see God in the mirror of our emotional reactions rather than in the mirror of the mysteries of our Lord's life and passion? How often do we exaggerate our natural qualities and consider them apart from God? We consider ourselves self-sufficient in matters spiritual, even though self-sufficiency has been called the very essence of sin. Many lives are wrecked spiritually because it was never quite understood that God is the architect of the interior, and must be so of necessity since the life given us in baptism is not just supernatural but superhuman, and entirely beyond the scope of private endeavor.

Then in regard to our neighbor. Time and again our judgments are guided by our immortalized senses, our inordinate passions, our personal bias and self-will. Says Father Garrigou-Lagrange:

We see our neighbor in the light of reason, which is deformed by our prejudices, egoism, pride, jealousies, and other passions. Consequently we approve in him

³ *The Three Ages of the Interior Life* (St. Louis, 1948), Vol. II, chap. XVII.

what pleases us from a human point of view, what is conformed to our natural taste or whims. As a result we condemn in him the things that annoy us, the things that bring out his superiority, the things that offend us.⁴

If we could see our neighbor in the light of faith and in a purely spiritual fashion, we would recognize souls rather than flesh and blood, souls that are on their way to heaven, as we are, souls that one day will share with us the vision of God within the bosom of the Father, when we shall see God as He is, and our neighbor in Him. Rightly understood and applied, this matter of viewing people as souls may well prove our strongest defense against a persistent inclination to judge others, and make life mutually bearable for such as are assigned by divine providence to live together.

Lastly, if we have the eye of faith, we shall judge all the events of life in the light of faith. Life is but a short moment, a brief causeway to eternity. As an Arabian proverb has it: "Life is like a bridge. Pass over it, but build no houses there." Holy Scripture remarks: "We have no permanent city, but we seek for the city that is to come" (Heb. 13:14). In the usual course of things, we take stock of current events, whether global or domestic, social or merely personal, mostly in a strictly human fashion. Rarely do we consider them from the supernatural point of view and as God's particular means to sanctify our souls. With God there is nothing casual, nothing fortuitous. The things, which we term fate or accidents, are calculated intentions in the mind of God, determined or at least permitted, to

lead us to Him. Even our crosses are generous designs of divine providence, weighed and numbered and carefully measured for our advancement in perfection, as says St. Paul: "For those who love God all things work together unto good" (Rom. 8:28).

As previously remarked, the perfection of this life of faith comes to us in the gifts of the Holy Spirit, more specifically by the gifts of wisdom and understanding. The gift of knowledge also belongs here, although in an inferior position, since it coordinates created realities, placing them in their proper perspective and in relation to God. Under the influence of this gift, even inanimate creatures become a means of sanctification along with animate creatures and intellectual beings. We use them with discretion, either by detaching ourselves from them when necessary, or by attaching ourselves to them within limits and solely in the way God has intended, that is, as a means to reach God. The whole of spirituality is very much a matter of viewing things with the eyes of God; and a growing docility to the Holy Spirit, living within us, is of the essence for its normal evolution. Thus, being informed by divine inspirations as from its proximate principle, our faith becomes operative and, receiving its modality of penetration and sweetness from God Himself, becomes the supreme norm of our every action, thought, and aspiration.

Far from having exhausted the full significance of this fourth petition by the preceding considerations, we turn to a final and most consoling meaning, such as is contained in the words of our Lord: "The bread that I will give is My flesh for the life of the world" (John 6:52). In the Vulgate edition of Sacred Scripture, St. Jerome renders

the present petition so as to read: "Give us this day our daily bread" (Luke 11:3). Alongside is given his version of the parallel of St. Matthew, which reads: "Give us this day our supersubstantial bread" (Matt. 6:11). The latter text, which prevails in the Rheims translation, and is replaced by "daily bread" in the version of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, seems to indicate that at least somewhere along the line the words were understood to refer explicitly to the Holy Eucharist. Be it as it may, the current petition does have a distinct reference to the "Bread of Life," as our Lord calls it, "which comes down from heaven, so that if anyone eat of it, he will not die" (John 6:50). St. Bonaventure, pointing at the threefold meaning of the present petition, says: "It is right that all three meanings be taken conjunctively, so that in asking for our daily bread we are asking at the same time for the necessities of material life, as well as for the invisible and visible sacrament of the Word of God."⁵

What is the precise extent of the real presence of our Lord and Savior in the Holy Eucharist? Faith teaches us first of all that by the consecration during Mass, the substance of the body and blood of Christ becomes present on the altar under the appearances of bread and wine, or rather in place of the natural substances corresponding to these appearances. It teaches further that the substance of Christ's body and blood remains actually, truly, and essentially present as long as the appearances endure, yet in such a manner that it is present whole and undivided under each species, as well as under any part thereof. It finally teaches that the sacramental presence of Christ exists

⁵ *Opera Omnia*, X, 209.

in such a way that it is not confined to any specific place, but is able to exist simultaneously in countless places, wherever the bread and wine are consecrated.

To explain this dogmatic doctrine, summarized in the three combined propositions, we must review what has been written about substance and accidents. Accidents are the phenomena in any given object which we see, taste, smell, touch, or hear. Underneath these accidents is something that does not depend on size, shape, color, taste, or smell, something we cannot perceive by the senses, but which we know to be real and so essential that the accidents cannot exist without it. This we call substance. In the case of the subject under discussion, we find that the commodity of bread may appear in various shapes and sizes. Its texture, color, and taste may be altered almost indefinitely. But it remains bread and retains its substance, no matter how much we change its appearance. In other words: there is something abiding, something essential underneath the surface which makes bread the substance it is, and no accidental change can alter this substance. Furthermore, the accidents cannot be separated from the substance; they have their only being in the substance; they are not the substance, but they are supported by the substance as such. Consequently, where there is a change of substances, there is a change of accidents, as was evident in our Lord's first recorded miracle at the marriage of Cana, where the substance of water was changed into the substance of wine, with a corresponding change of accidental appearances as well. But in the mystery of the Holy Eucharist, where it concerns the revealed truth that the body and blood of Christ are truly present under the

appearances of bread and wine, we must accept that, through the words of Christ repeated by the priest, the whole substance of bread is changed into the substance of the body of Christ, and the substance of wine is changed into the substance of the blood of Christ, while the accidental appearances of the bread and wine remain without the proper substances to support them. In other words, we still see, feel, and taste the real accidents of bread, which veil the body of our Lord, and are supported no longer by their own substance, but by the almighty power of God directly. A similar process is ascertained in the change of the wine. This conversion from substance to substance while the former accidental appearances are retained is entirely unique in the field of changes, and is called transubstantiation.

In all this we must solidly hold that the body of Christ is not merely present in the bread, but replaces its substance in its entirety. Christ thus taking the place of the substance of the bread, which is naturally capable of passing over into our body, unites Himself to us as closely as though He were the bread itself. The reason why our Lord took the substance of bread and made it into His living body by conversion is to be found in the fact that He thus wishes to effect a real and organic union between Himself and us. For there is nothing that becomes more intimately united with us and is more our own than the food which we consume. While it is converted into our substance by the agency of nature, it sustains us, repairs the ravages of daily life, makes us grow and wax strong. The food of the soul, given us in the Holy Eucharist, produces all these effects spiritually, but does not convert into our substance.

Rather we are converted into the substance of our Lord's sacred body, for the consecrated bread acts upon us by the divine energy residing in it. This divine energy, which feeds and nourishes us in the Eucharist, is properly the divine energy of the Word inhabiting Christ's flesh. But if, in order to give us life, the divine Word unites His human body to us in so astounding a fashion, we must conclude that He unites His divinity to our souls as well, together with His body, for it is the living Christ whom we receive. In this we find the sacramental character of the Eucharist, inasmuch as our partaking of the God-Man's human flesh and blood constitutes the sign and the instrument by which a real participation in His divinity is signified and effected.

Since the Holy Eucharist is not only a sacrament, but also a sacrifice, a few additional remarks about its sacrificial character are in order. Reviewing a previously made observation about the expediency of the Incarnation, we recall that its effect in our respect was twofold. When our Lord became man in order to redeem us, our supernatural elevation to a more exalted dignity was uppermost in His mind. He wished to give us a new title to grace, raise us far above our former selves and above all previous dispensation of grace, making us participants of His own grace as Incarnate Son of God. The first purpose was carried out as a necessary condition of the second. When we turn to the Holy Eucharist, we recognize a correlated, twofold purpose, but in reverse order. The particular aim of the Blessed Sacrament is not only to establish man in his newly acquired dignity and strengthen him in his supernatural life, but also to predispose him for a more intimate and

most comprehensive participation in the sacrifice of the cross. This leads us directly to the particular aim of the Holy Eucharist in its sacrificial character.

Sacrifice, understood in its most compendious sense, involves a certain fundamental change in the object offered, even to the destruction of the victim. Although we cannot see the sacrificial character of the Eucharist in the annihilation of the bread and wine, effected by transubstantiation, still the consecration of the same changes their substance into the sacrificial body and blood of our Lord, making them an acceptable offering to God. The value of the sacrificial action is not to be gauged by the value of the gift undergoing change, but by the value of the gift into which it is changed. To make the Holy Eucharist actually effective in respect to the creature, the miraculous conversion of bread into the body of Christ must correspond to another conversion, one which takes place within man's interior, and is fashioned after the change made in the Eucharistic Bread as its exemplary and efficient cause. We perceive how deeply and with what unexcelled generosity God's love invades the world of His creatures. The same omnipotent power which changes earthly bread into heavenly bread by making it the body of Christ, changes those who participate in this heavenly food from earthly into heavenly, deified men. At the same time, the sacrificial offering under this form of natural bread makes our efficient participation in the sacrifice possible. For, by partaking of Christ in the Holy Eucharist, we are able, because of our substantial union, to reproduce within ourselves His sacrificial life and death, and become one body with Him even in His sacrifice. Meanwhile the bread itself

is not without significance. As the noblest food of man, bread is properly representative of our bodies. This bread, as the prayers before consecration clearly indicate, is our humble, though real contribution to the sacrifice on the altar, and in the sacrificial offering takes an integral position. But only in so far as it is changed into Christ's living body. Thus we recognize a perfect coordination between the change of bread into Christ's body and our own commutation into Christ by means of the Eucharist. In both instances we see the lower gift changed into the higher. However gradual this actual transformation may take effect in our instance, the analogy finds us represented in both the lower gift and the higher—in the lower by actual representation, in the higher by corporate union with the Victim.

Besides the fact that the Eucharistic action is a true sacrifice in its own right and makes our participation possible, it is simultaneously a glorious commemoration and a true re-enactment of Christ's immolation once accomplished on the cross. When in the Eucharistic sacrifice the God-Man makes His appearance under the separate forms of bread and wine—under the species of bread being present directly with His body, and under the species of wine directly with the blood He shed for us—He reappears under the symbols of His immolation on the cross, as the Lamb slain for the honor of God. Thus the remembrance is visibly depicted in the separation of body and blood according to the words of the consecration, and the sacrificial Lamb is offered to God by the re-enactment of the immolation that took place of old as a holocaust of the noblest and most sublime order, which is consumed by the fire that rushes forth from the heart of God.

The question has been asked whether Christ degrades Himself in His sacramental mode of existence. In this respect one may concentrate on the concealment of Christ's glory and majesty, which is a necessary consequence of His sacramental presence. In the hypostatic union we are confronted with a similar veil which hid Christ's divinity and infinite majesty from the human eye. But in neither instance can we conclude to a humiliating debasement of Christ's body. We must rather look upon His spiritual, even divine way of existence in the Holy Eucharist, and conclude that His sacramental mode of existence far excels His manner of existence in the human flesh. The body of Christ is the body of the Son of God. But for all that, Christ's body, while on earth, continued to exist in a manner proper to a human body. In the hypostatic union the personality of the Word acted as the radical principle of all the human operations of the Savior, in the sense that the Incarnate Word of God knew by a human intellect, willed by a human will, spoke, lived, suffered, and died in a human fashion. In the Holy Eucharist, the body of Christ, although material in itself, exists after the fashion of a spiritual substance, somewhat like the soul in the body. For which reason it is substantially present whole and indivisible in the entire host. The indivisibility of the presence of Christ's body in the Holy Eucharist reaches even so far that, after a division of the host has been made, His body continues to exist in every part of it, in which respect it excels the soul which, after a division of the members, can continue to exist only in one of its parts. It must further be remarked that Christ's body while on earth was restricted by place and time. In His Eucharistic

existence, He is present not in a single place, but in numerous separate places, and at the same moment. In this it excels the characteristics of created spirits, such as angels, who are determined by the application of their power to a definite place. In view of all this it must be concluded that the body of Christ, present in the Holy Eucharist, not only transcends its own nature, but the properties of a spiritual substance as well, be it soul or angel, inasmuch as it participates in the properties of the uncreated Spirit in respect to its simplicity, its pervasive power, its universality, and shares in the mode of existence proper to God Himself.

While we thus perceive that the supernatural character of the Eucharistic presence consists in the fact that Christ's body enjoys a higher mode of existence than is conferred on a body by nature, and is explicitly spiritual, even divine, we must use the expression *spiritual presence* with a great deal of reserve. Wrongly understood, it will destroy the reality of His sacramental existence, particularly when we take spiritual as distinguished from matter, or as pertaining to the soul rather than to the body. If used in its correct connotation and expressing a presence according to the manner of spirits, it does not exclude Christ's real and factual presence in spiritual fashion, but rather emphasizes it, since spirits can be present in a place or an object in a more real, intimate, and perfect manner than bodies can. But even in this manner of use it falls far short of its full bearing in respect to the Eucharistic presence, as seen above. For which reason it seems advisable to refrain from using the term entirely, and to refer to Christ's presence in the Holy Eucharist as a real and actual presence of

His sacred body in a highly spiritual, even divine manner.

Although we accept the term *spiritual presence* in reference to the sacramental presence of Christ with a great deal of reserve, we welcome the expression *spiritual food*, inasmuch as Christ's sacred body is meant to spiritualize and divinize our entire being. This Christ's body is able to do precisely because He exists in the Holy Eucharist in the spiritual manner designated above. The expression therefore has reference to the life-giving energy that emanates from the body of Christ which, because of its hypostatic union with the Son of God, is the organ of Divinity by which men are animated, spiritualized, and made eminently God-like, more in soul than in body. It especially emphasizes the fact that this heavenly food does not perform the function of purely material food, which supports our bodily existence and hence is changed into the substance of the one who consumes it. This heavenly food nourishes us in a spiritual manner, and does so not by being absorbed into us, but by changing us into itself. Having been designed to be a real nourishment by the divine energy residing in it, it has all the characteristics of natural food and allows the most intimate contact with us just as natural food allows, but it does so in a spiritualized manner and with the patent design to transform us more and more into Jesus Christ. Taken as a material food, it would nourish only the body in a material fashion, and not the soul. As a matter of fact, this supernatural food cannot be received into us in a carnal way. At the moment that it is received in this manner, it is destroyed as a supernatural food.

With the preceding in mind, it becomes easy to under-

stand the promise of the institution, as recorded by St. John. The morning after our Lord had fed the multitude in the desert, the crowd sought Him in the synagogue at Capharnaum. Christ chided them, saying:

You seek Me, not because you have seen signs, but because you have eaten of the loaves and have been filled. Do not labor for the food that perishes, but for that which endures unto life everlasting, which the Son of Man will give you. For upon Him the Father, God Himself, has set His seal (John 6:26-27).

They inquired what they were to do in order to perform the works of God. Thereupon our Lord insisted that this was the work of God, that they believe in Him whom God had sent. True to form and obstinate in their unbelief regarding the Messiah, they requested another sign by which they could see and believe His divine mission, even suggesting that He match the miracle of the manna in the desert. "What sign, then, dost Thou, that we may see and believe Thee? What work dost Thou perform? Our fathers ate the manna in the desert, even as it is written, 'Bread from heaven He gave them to eat'" (John 6:30-31). Now the stage was set for the great promise. He would give them bread indeed, a bread of which the manna was but a vague and dim symbol. He Himself was the bread that had come down from heaven, from the bosom of God, containing within Himself the essence of divine life. He Himself was truly a heavenly bread for the nourishment of their soul, and He proceeded to show that faith was necessary if they wished to be nourished by this life-giving bread. Such faith was as much a gift from the Father as the bread

which the Father gave them in His Son. "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall not hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst" (John 6:35).

Up till now, He had asked only that they believe in Him as the Son of God who had come down from heaven like a heavenly food to give them everlasting life. But what was true of this bread in a metaphoric and ideal sense, He intended to produce in a true and strictly realistic manner. This was to be the sign they asked for, just as an evil and adulterous generation had demanded a sign previously, and no sign was given them other than the sign of Jonas the prophet, in the realism of His resurrection (Matt. 12:39). Thus He proceeded with calculated determination:

The bread that I will give is My flesh for the life of the world . . . Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has life everlasting and I will raise him up on the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh, and drinks My blood, abides in Me and I in him. As the living Father has sent Me, and as I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me. This is the bread that has come down from heaven; not as your fathers ate the manna, and died. He who eats this bread shall live forever (John 6:52-59).

This would be the fulfillment of their desire, the sign they asked for, the great challenge to their unbelief. The Jews were not willing to accept. Even some of the disciples were perplexed. The words could no longer be explained away in the sense of a purely ideal partaking of His flesh and

blood by faith. "This is a hard saying. Who can listen to it?" (John 6:62). Well aware that some of them were preparing to leave Him permanently since they grasped His real meaning, but only in a crudely literal and bloody sense, He added: "It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But there are some among you who do not believe" (John 6:64-65). He thus took their error by its root. Theirs was a lack of faith. They must be made to understand that His flesh, as mere flesh, could be of no avail to them. It was the Spirit, energizing this flesh, which was of true and lasting value. Whoever believed in His divinity in the first place would at least grasp the general idea, and be willing to accept His word, so difficult to understand, in confirmation. The human flesh in which He appeared had divine power because of the hypostatic union with the Son of God. His sacred humanity could also be made to appear under the accidents of common bread, if He so willed, in which instance people would be able to partake of this bread in human fashion and thus participate in the omnipotent power of Christ's divinity. All this was extremely vague to their minds at the moment. But those who had accepted His divine origin from the beginning would be willing to go the entire length of the way and believe that His sacred flesh could be empaneled in common bread and become the food of souls.

Generally speaking, the Fathers sound a warning also to us not to regard the flesh of our Lord in too carnal a fashion. It is indeed flesh of the same substance as our flesh, not formed, however, in the manner of ordinary flesh, but by the power of the Most High overshadowing the

Virgin. Although it possesses the true nature of flesh, it is not subject to the defects of the flesh, because of the Spirit of God which abides in it. The same divine Spirit brings the flesh of Christ, as the organ of God's spiritual energy, upon the altar, there to unite it with the flesh of the faithful unto a life which is at once spiritual and divine. The Apostle exhorts us, by the mercy of God, to present our bodies as a sacrifice, living, holy, pleasing to God—our spiritual service (Rom. 12:1). Our flesh can be a sacrifice acceptable to God only by ceasing to be carnal, by being pervaded, ruled, and purified by the spirit. But even this spiritualization of the flesh is a sacrifice truly pleasing to God only if the body, like the soul itself, is sanctified and transfigured by the Spirit of God and in the manner Christ's own body was purified and spiritualized in the highest degree by the same Spirit to raise it above all the limitations and defects of material and corporal nature. Is it surprising that God's holy Spirit, with which we became so closely associated when we were incorporated in Christ by baptism, uses the same means, that is to say, Christ's sacred body, which brought about our first union with God, to strengthen this bond in a new and physical manner? This is brought about to help us overcome the remnants of original sin as expressed in the limitations and defects of our corporal nature, and make us truly spiritual in the sight of God.

Here we sense the close interrelation which exists between the Holy Eucharist and the mystery of the Incarnation. As a matter of record, the Fathers recognize the Eucharist not only as a complement of the Incarnation, but as a true continuation and visible extension of the same

mystery. The latter itself finds its explanation in the issue of the eternal processions within the Deity. For this reason the Holy Eucharist cannot be considered as an isolated fact. It is rather a link in a chain of related mysteries, which take their origin in the mystery of the Blessed Trinity where the Word of God received His being within the bosom of the eternal Father, stepped forth into the world, taking unto Himself the flesh of our mortality, and maintains a universal presence among men by means of the Eucharist to assure them a continual share in His lasting mission. By the Incarnation He became flesh of our flesh in a real and tangible way. In the Holy Eucharist we become flesh of His flesh in so perfect and intimate a manner that the first union is by comparison no more than a foundation and type of the second. If the Word is made flesh by assuming our flesh, is He not to some extent incarnated anew when He joins Himself to us in the Holy Eucharist so completely that we are renewed in Christ and form, so to speak, one body with Him? Says St. Chrysostom: "We enter into fellowship with Him not only by eating and receiving Him, but also by becoming one with Him. For, as that body is united to Christ, we also are united to Him by this bread."⁶ An exclusively moral coalition of the soul with our Lord, one by which we bring our mind and heart in line with His, is not sufficient for this union. The union of the spirit with God, which is represented and produced by the Holy Eucharist, is based upon a real penetration of the divine Spirit of our Lord. He lowers Himself into the soul with His innermost essence, floods it with His own life, and penetrates the most secret recesses. Thus our

⁶ Migne, PG, LXI, 200.

spirit lives of God and in God and appears to be swallowed up in the stream of divine life. We become one spirit with God as truly as we become one body with Christ in the Holy Eucharist. We could never attain to such an intimate, spiritual union with God, even by the most perfect development of our spiritual life, apart from the Eucharist. For in the latter the truth is realized that the Son of God does more than produce an imitation of His divine life in us: He actually continues it in us in a most realistic manner: Christ in us, and we in Christ, as our Lord said at the Last Supper, that we may be one in God, and be perfected in unity (John 17:23). St. Cyril of Alexandria has a beautiful and consoling doctrine which places the consolidated union of all Christians in the unifying bond of the Holy Eucharist. Since the passage has also reference to the kindred mysteries of the Incarnation and the Blessed Trinity, we quote it in its entirety.⁷

It would in a sense be unbecoming that the sentence of condemnation of the first man should have passed to all men, and that those who did not violate the command should bear the dishonorable image of earthly men, unless at the coming of Christ, who appeared among us as the heavenly man, all those who were called by Him to justice should be molded to His image. However, it was impossible for us, who had fallen away through the sin of the first man, to be restored to our original glory, unless we were admitted to an ineffable fellowship and union with God; for thus the nature of men upon earth had been ennobled from the beginning. But no one can attain to union with God except by participation in the

⁷ Migne, PG, LXXIV, 553ff.

Holy Spirit, who implants in us the sanctity proper to His own person and forms anew to His own life the nature that has been subject to corruption, thus bringing back to God and to His likeness those who had been deprived of so great a glory. For the Son is the exact image of the Father; and the Spirit is the natural likeness of the Son. For this reason, He transforms the souls of men as it were into Himself, stamps them with the divine likeness, and molds them to the image of the Most High.

Now the union of the faithful in concord of mind and heart ought to imitate the manner of the divine unity and the essential identity of the Holy Trinity and the perfect connection of the Persons with one another. Taking then the physical unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, as admitted by all, we realize that the only-begotten Son, proceeding from the very substance of God the Father, and bearing His begetter completely within His own nature, was made flesh according to the Scriptures, joining Himself, so to speak, to our nature by an ineffable union and conjunction with this body of earth. Thus He, who is by nature God, truly became a heavenly man, both in name and in reality, not as a man who bears God within Him, but as one who is at the same time God and man. This He did, combining as it were in Himself things widely separated by nature and averse to fusion with each other, in order that He might enable man to share and participate in the divine nature. Thus the fellowship and abiding presence of the Holy Spirit has also passed on to us, beginning with Christ, who as man like us was anointed and sanctified by the Holy Spirit; but as true God, inasmuch as He proceeds from the Father, first sanctifies His own temple with His own Spirit who proceeds from Him, and through

Him all creatures capable of sanctification. Thus the mystery that is in Christ has been, so to speak, a beginning and a way admitting us to participation in the same Holy Spirit and to union with God.

That we might attain to union with God and with one another, and in spite of the individual differences that separate us, that we might be joined and united in body and soul, the only-begotten devised a special plan in the wisdom proper to Him and by the counsel of His Father. With one body, that is His own, He blesses those who believe in Him through the mystic partaking of Him in Holy Communion, and makes them one body with Himself and with each other. For who will separate those who are joined to Christ in unity by that one sacred body, and detach them from the real union which they have among themselves? For thus says the Apostle: "Because the bread is one, we though many, are one body, all of us who partake of the one bread" (1 Cor. 10:17). Christ cannot be divided. On this account also the Church is called the body of Christ, and we are His several members.

The Council of Trent confirms the identical doctrine.

Our Lord has willed to leave us this sacrament as a symbol of the intimate union of the mystical body, of which He is the head, to which He wishes us to be united as members by the strongest bond of faith, hope, and charity, so that we all may proclaim the same doctrine, and there be no dissensions among us, but that we be perfectly united in one mind and in one judgment (Sess. XIII, c.2).

This bond of union, as St. Augustine calls it, is primarily the bond of charity in love. The supernatural life of the

soul, the common ground of love in God and in us, allows in the creature of an ever greater increase both in respect to God and to neighbor. It is the particular end of the Eucharist to give us the actual graces needed to bring this life to full bloom.

However great and delightful our substantial possession and partaking of the Lord in the Eucharist proves to be, it is still only a foretaste of the bliss which is to come. The day will arrive that we no longer need this heavenly food. Then the fullness of the divinity will descend into the depth of the soul, there to supply food and drink for the unfolding of the soul's eternal activity in God. The Holy Eucharist cannot be conceived and appreciated apart from this final relationship to the beatific vision. As such it is a type, a promise, and an actual prelude of the full possession of God, adapted to our present powers of reception, as St. Thomas expresses it in the antiphon of the feast of Corpus Christi, summarizing the entire mystery of the Holy Eucharist: "O sacred banquet, in which Christ is received, the memory of His passion renewed; in which the soul is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory given us."

Forgive Us Our Trespasses

THE current petition appears in three versions. “Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors” (Matt. 6:12). “Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us” (Luke 11:4). And the familiar reading, taken from the Catechism, “Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.” All three are uniform in essence, and convey the same fundamental idea.

With the fifth petition the tenor of our prayer again changes. So far we have asked God to grant us every kind of spiritual good, eternal and temporal. Here we pray to be delivered from all evil: past, present, and future. Says the Catechism of Trent: “After having presented ourselves before God in the preceding petitions as poor mendicants, standing in need of all in the order of nature and grace, we now appear before Him as insolvent debtors, who have no way of repairing the damage wrought by sin.”¹ Looking at the burden of sin which is ours, we are overwhelmed by the thought of impotence and dereliction. Not only are we unable to cover the shame of ingratitude which every sin

¹ *Catechism of the Council of Trent for Parish Priests.*

involves, but we are frightened by its eternal magnitude which makes forgiveness impossible, if it were not for the infinite mercy of God. Here the cross of Christ looms reassuringly. St. Thomas remarks that this is the prayer of hope, in which our Lord was thoughtful enough to place all the saving power of His passion. Says the Catechism of the Council:

There are many things which show that the infinite power of God is accompanied by equally infinite wisdom and goodness. But there is nothing that proclaims His immense love and boundless kindness toward us as eloquently as does the mystery of the passion of our Lord, from which springs that inexhaustible fountain of mercy which washes away sin and the remainder of sin.²

In the preceding chapters it was repeatedly emphasized that our Lord and Savior did not assume our human flesh exclusively for the sake of man and because of sin. In fact, man's plight can be explained only by the demands of God's offended honor, for which reason the glory of God must remain the highest aim and the purest motive of both the Incarnation and the Redemption. Still the fact remains that Christ's suffering is connected with sin as with its occasion and as a reason for its necessity. This necessity, however, was relative, for God could have forgiven Adam's transgression, as well as all subsequent personal sin, without demanding a full and adequate satisfaction. Atonement by the God-man was necessary only on the supposition that man's deliverance was to be achieved not through sheer

² *Ibid.*

mercy, but by meeting all the requirements of justice. But even under the aspect of justice, we cannot maintain that the latter obliged God unconditionally to exact such satisfaction as was actually given. In this respect St. Thomas remarks:

This matter of justice depends on the divine will, which exacts satisfaction for sin from the human race. If God had willed to free man from sin without imposing any satisfaction, He could have done so without evidence of injustice. Obviously, a civil judge cannot simply dismiss a crime without imposing punishment if there be question of an injury committed against another, either against an individual, a whole state, or against a ruler who is his superior. God however has no superior above Him, but is Himself the supreme and common good of the whole universe. Hence if He should remit sin, which is culpable for the reason that it is committed against Him, He wrongs no one, just as a person who forgives an offense committed against himself without demanding satisfaction acts mercifully, but not unjustly.³

In reality, the evil and infinite consequences of sin concern the human race more than God Himself. By sin, God's majesty is attacked in an external and merely accidental manner; but grave sin harms man internally to the extent that it erases his former dignity as God's adopted child. As matters stand, no man can recover this lost distinction and dignity, unless it be restored to him by a new and gratuitous grace of God in the manner Adam first received original justice. But God desired the human race

³ *Summa Theologica*, IIIa, q. 46, a. 2, ad 3.

to make personal reparation, and in the process recover the state of supernatural justice. This He brought about by allowing the eternal Word, God's only-begotten Son, to incorporate with the human race and become man. In this manner, the Word Incarnate in His capacity of man could take the burden of sin upon Himself, and in His capacity of God render infinite satisfaction for sin. On the other hand, when God allows His Son to become man, He also furnishes man an opportunity to come in closer union with His Son. Nor could grace be thus firmly established within Christ without also taking a firmer hold on humanity and providing a more solid foundation to the state of adoption, which is now no longer based on simple grace but on the grace of incorporation with the God-Man. At the same time and by the same token, Christ has been established permanent mediator between God and man. Although reconciliation remains a prime factor in the work of redemption, since the payment of the human debt in full was to precede all the higher effects of the Incarnation as a preliminary condition, the infinite distance which nature itself sets up between God and creature has been abolished permanently and a new union has been set up between God and creature which is willed for its own sake, a union which has become the very foundation of all future supernatural favors to be bestowed on mankind.

The mediatorship of Christ is best understood when we view His mediation in connection with His eternal priesthood. Originally sacrifice was of the simplest kind and was offered by the individual for his personal needs, by the head of the family or clan for its members collectively, or by the chief or king for the entire people. With the growth

of ceremonial prayers and rites, the obligation of sacrifice gave rise to the class of priests whose duty it was to make sacrificial offerings in strict conformity with a complicated ritual. Aaron and his sons were chosen by God to be priests. Aaron himself was the first high-priest, having been anointed and consecrated with oil poured out on his head (Lev. 8:12). It was the high-priest's privilege to enter the Holy of Holies on the day of atonement—that is once a year—to sprinkle the blood of sin offering (Lev. 16:29). St. Paul indicates the typical character of the high-priest in respect to Christ.

When Christ appeared as high priest of the good things to come, He entered once for all through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made by hands—that is not of this creation—nor again by virtue of goats and calves, but by virtue of His own blood; into the Holies, having obtained eternal redemption (Heb. 9:11–12).

As a matter of fact, Christ is the anointed—not with oil poured unto His head—but with divinity poured out upon His humanity. It was by the grace which made Him the God-Man, and at the very moment that this union was accomplished, that our Lord was anointed, consecrated, and constituted priest. Says St. Paul: "No man takes the honor to himself; he takes it who is called by God, as Aaron was. So also Christ did not glorify Himself with the high priesthood, but He who spoke to Him, 'Thou art My Son, I this day have begotten Thee'" (Heb. 5:4–5). This is precisely why He is Mediator of the New Covenant, having appeared for the destruction of sin by the

sacrifice of Himself, a sacrifice which was initiated at the Incarnation and consummated on the cross when, bowing His head, He gave up the spirit.

Christ's sacrifice on the cross was the highest sacrifice ever realized since the foundation of the world to the extent that all other sacrifices are contained in it. Scholars are not agreed on the primary idea underlying the use of sacrifice. The most likely view is that sacrifice is in the first place a token of respect in the form of a gift. Besides being a visible proof of man's deference, it also signified that all things are God's. For this reason the object was partially or totally destroyed, implying that the offering was returned to God from whom it came. Hence the word sacrifice, which carries the idea of consecration. As an irreducible minimum, sacrifice requires an externally manifested dedication of the sacrificial gift to God with a prayer for its acceptance. But as long as the sacrificial offering remains external to the giver, the sacrifice remains purely symbolic in character. To have real objective value, the material gift must be strictly personal in the sense that it is an oblation of him who offers it. Only then is the sacrificial idea perfectly realized, when the victim and the offerer are joined in one person. As was previously remarked, this lofty notion cannot be attained by man. First, because such form of sacrifice is forbidden by God's positive law. Second, because it is unsuitable to human nature. Not being limited by such restrictions, our Lord alone can offer the perfect sacrifice, at once the most efficacious expression of divine worship, since the offerer is of divine dignity and the victim of infinite desert. His sacrifice was simultaneously external and internal: external

in all its fullness, even to the crucifixion of His body and the shedding of the last drop of His blood; internal in the widest sense of the term, since it was completely voluntary and emphasized the lofty height of His sacrificial disposition. The primary purpose of sacrifice was thus completely attained, because it gave infinite honor and glory to God and acknowledged Him as the supreme Lord and master of all life.

But when we speak of Christ's sacrifice on the cross, we usually refer to its specific propitiatory nature. Although in itself secondary, this characteristic assumes prime importance in our eyes because it emphasizes atonement and redemption, and filled up the bottomless chasm that sin had blasted open between God and man. This was no simple cancellation of the debt of the human race, but a payment in full. It took away the unworthiness and helplessness which resulted from sin. It assured man of the happy return to God's friendship, and a superabundance of grace which far exceeds original justice. The propitiatory character of Christ's sacrifice was well illustrated by the prophet Isaias, who pictures the Messiah as taking the place of guilty mankind. "Surely He has borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows: and we have thought Him as it were a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted" (Isai. 53:4). His vicarious suffering is further stressed by the immediately following passage. "But He was wounded for our iniquities, He was bruised for our sins: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His bruises we were healed" (verse 5). Even the manner of suffering and satisfaction through a bloody death on the Cross is specified. "He was offered because it was His own will, and He

opened not His mouth: He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and shall be dumb as a lamb before his shearer, and He shall not open His mouth" (verse 7).

In the Old Testament the expiatory power of the sacrifice was found in the blood of the victim, the oblation or the sprinkling of the blood on the sacrificial altar by the priest constituting the real essence of the bloody sacrifice. The explanation is given in Sacred Scripture: "Because the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you, that you may make atonement with it upon the altar for your souls, and the blood may be for an expiation of the soul" (Lev. 17:11). Since it bears the life of the victim, the blood represents and symbolizes the soul of man, and the idea of substitution finds clear expression in the sprinkling of blood. In the Old Testament there were two classes of expiatory sacrifices. The distinction between the two is determined by their purpose. The one concentrated on the absolution of the person from sin, and was named sin-offering. The other intended to make satisfaction for the injury done, and was called guilt-offering. In both the shedding of blood was considered essential, as St. Paul remarks, commenting on the sacrifices of the Old Dispensation: "With blood almost everything is cleansed according to the Law, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Heb. 9:22).

Both sacrifices, as well as all other symbolic offerings of the Old Law, were replaced in the New Dispensation by the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. The transcendental importance of this sacrifice in its expiatory capacity is repeatedly emphasized in the writings of St. Paul. "They are justified freely by His grace through the redemption

which is in Christ Jesus, whom God has set forth as a propitiation by His blood" (Rom. 3:24–25). Referring to the types of the Old Testament, he elaborates in his letter to the Hebrews: "If the blood of goats and bulls and the sprinkled ashes of a heifer sanctify the unclean unto the cleansing of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the Holy Spirit offered Himself unblemished unto God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Heb. 9:13–14). To this, St. Peter adds: "You know that you were redeemed from the vain manner of life handed down from your fathers, not with perishable things, with silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:18–19). Sins are not forgiven without the shedding of blood. When St. John saw the vision of the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders falling down in adoration before the Lamb, he heard them sing this canticle of praise: "Worthy art Thou to take the scroll and to open its seals; for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us for God with Thy blood" (Apoc. 5:9). Do we not repeat at Mass our Lord's own words, "This is the chalice of My blood, which will be shed for you and for many unto remission of sins?" The Catechism of Trent stresses the same:

The very manner which God, our most merciful Father, has adopted to wash away the sins of the world, is highly calculated to stimulate the minds of the faithful to contemplate the greatness of this blessing. For it was in the blood of His only-begotten Son that He willed that our sins should be expiated, that the Son should voluntarily pay the penalty

which we deserved for our sins, that the Just should be condemned for the unjust, and the Innocent suffer a most bitter death for the guilty.⁴

We may add in this regard that the merits of the cross are applied to individuals in sacrificial form by the Eucharistic Sacrifice of the Mass, the unbloody representation and continuation of the bloody offering of Calvary. In this Christ has become surety of a superior covenant. The priests of the Old Covenant indeed were numerous, but they were prevented by death from continuing in office. Christ, however, enjoys an everlasting priesthood, in which He continues in our behalf. "Therefore He is able at all times to save those who come to God through Him, since He lives always to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:25).

A question arises about the nature of the sacrificial action of Christ on the cross. Did the sacrificial act consist in the slaying of the Victim? This could hardly be the case, since in that instance the function of the high-priest would have been exercised, not by Christ, but by the Roman soldiers who crucified Him. In this respect our previous observation carries its weight. In the Mosaic Law the essence of the sacrifice was not to be found in the actual slaying of the victim, but in the sprinkling of the blood by the officiating priest. The destruction of the victim was at most the material, and the oblation the formal element of the sacrifice. For this reason, the essence of the sacrifice of the cross, at which Christ functioned as both victim and priest, must likewise be sought in the free offer-

⁴ *Catechism of the Council of Trent for Parish Priests.*

ing of His blood for our sake, inasmuch as our Lord, while outwardly submitting to the shedding of His blood by the executioners, simultaneously offered it to His Father in the spirit of sacrifice. In this respect our Lord testified: "I lay down My life for My sheep. . . . No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have the power to lay it down, and I have the power to take it up again. Such is the command I have received from My Father" (John 10:15; 18).

While the Apostolic Fathers merely repeated the Biblical doctrine of our Lord's sacrificial death, St. Irenaeus commenced to emphasize the fact that Christ redeemed the world in the capacity of God-Man. Because of His personal, divine dignity, the God-Man merits for the race the entire series of supernatural gifts which man could have merited in no other way. Although the Son of God can merit supernatural goods for His own human nature and, by extension of privileges, for the whole human race by the very fact of His Incarnation, and regardless of any other meritorious activity on His part, Irenaeus did not overlook the point that, as matters actually stand, God has made the communication of these goods dependent on Christ's meritorious activities. Thus he ascribed to the passion of our Lord the same effects as he ascribed to the Incarnation, namely, the forgiveness of sins, the annihilation of death, and the re-making of man unto God. The Council of Trent recapitulates the several causes which brought about this justification. First and foremost is the final cause which concerns the glory of God and of Christ, and life eternal. The efficient cause is the mercy of God who, without merit or claim on our part, washes and sanctifies, seals and

anoints us with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the pledge of our inheritance. But the meritorious cause is God's well-beloved and only-begotten Son, our own Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who, by reason of His very great love wherewith He has loved us while we were as yet God's enemies, merited for us justification by His most holy passion on the wood of the cross, giving satisfaction to God, His Father, in our stead (Sess. VI, c. 7).

As repeatedly stated, redemption has a twofold effect on humanity: first, the remission of sin, which is the negative side; and our rebirth from God in Jesus Christ, which is the positive aspect. From eternity, Christ has been constituted the depositary of grace. Grace belongs to Him essentially as His own, and through Him it truly belongs to the race in which He assumed membership. For this reason we considered Christ as the supplement of our first parent, whose function it was to make up for the defect of the race brought about by Adam's fall. But He was first and foremost the complement of Adam, inasmuch as He was constituted from all eternity the true and immutable foundation and principle of all grace in mankind, which Adam was not. Only because He was essentially the complement of Adam could He become his supplement in redemption, and re-elevate the race, not just to the former height of our first parent, but to a new height of grace which surpasses the original state of justice as day surpasses night. In this connection, St. Cyril of Alexandria remarks:

He is the only-begotten by nature, for He alone proceeds from the Father as Son. He alone is God of God, Light of Light, begotten and not made. But

He is the first-born on account of us, in order that every creature may be inserted in Him as in an undying root, and may grow forth from Him who is forever.⁵

By virtue of our incorporation in Christ we share in the community of divine life which is essentially His in the bosom of the Father, and we share in somewhat the same manner as brothers and sisters share in the distinction and privileges of their elder brother because of blood relationship. When the combined effect of the Incarnation and Redemption are thus applied to us, we are justified unto living members of Christ's body, and justifying grace flows to us from this source. At the moment that Christ begins to live in us by grace, we are energized by the personal sanctity of the God-Man. This we may call the grace of redemption. Henceforth the Father looks upon us as He looks upon His incarnate Son. Our former state of sin He can no longer discern, since it has been justly paid for and obliterated by His own Son. Evidently, this doctrine is far removed from the stand, taken by Protestantism, which holds that Christian justification is merely external, in the sense that guilt is no longer imputed to us because of the merits of Jesus Christ. Ours is an internal renewal, a regeneration by grace, which at once expels sin and equips man for leading a truly holy life. It returns to our souls the supernatural likeness of the divine nature and endows us with a holy disposition and a living union with God. As such it is sanctifying grace, unqualified. But it is also a formal consecration, bestowed upon us somewhat in the

⁵ Migne, PG, LXXV, 405.

manner that the internal holiness and justice of Christ's humanity are crowned, perfected, and consecrated by the holiness and excellence of the divine nature united with His humanity. We cannot conceive of Christ's justice, as being a model of ours, as having any real connection with us unless a living likeness of it is impressed on our souls. Our justification is at no time a mere replica of the personal justice of Christ. It is linked to that justice in real union, and hence it is completed and crowned by it to the effect that it makes us pleasing to God and brings out the fact that we belong to the Son of God as the members of the same body belong to the same head. Nor can this likeness and impress be disconnected from its exemplar. For the connection is based upon the relation of effect to cause, as well as upon the organic unity of justified man with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Christian justification, thus conceived, leaves the supernatural justice of Adam far behind, since ours is an actual participation in Christ's own divine justice.

The preceding does not imply that even in this present life the human race must receive through the God-Man all the prerogatives of integrity which it actually possessed in Adam before the fall. The divine Word did not endow His own humanity with all of these during His mortal life. The gift of integrity, given to Adam, was but a means to preserve and perfect habitual grace, and can be dispensed with as long as the Incarnate Word Himself supplies the deficit. But, as a matter of fact, we do receive integrity under its threefold aspect of infused knowledge, complete control of the senses, and immortality, if not during the present life, at least in the life to come, when

we shall receive it as a truly perfected gift in the glorious state of transfiguration. No infused knowledge equals the beatific knowledge, when we shall see God face to face, as says the Apostle: "Now I know in part, but then I shall know even as I have been known" (1 Cor. 13:12). Complete control of higher faculties over lower shall be second nature when we are taken up bodily into God's bosom and will be as angels of God in heaven. As to immortality, this too shall be eternal. In God's dwelling, death shall be no more, nor shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, for the former things have passed away (Apoc. 21:4). Nature will be restored to complete integrity when it will be transfigured to be incorrupted and incorruptible in divine beauty for all eternity.

Nor does justified man have to wait for this transformation until the end of time. It lies within his power to recapture integrity, at least gradually and in due measure, even on earth. In the justified Christian, divine knowledge keeps pace with the increase of the divinely infused virtue of charity and a more intense development of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, particularly wisdom, knowledge, and understanding. Control of the senses grows stronger when, under the influence of grace, we practice the moral virtues of prudence, fortitude, and temperance; and again when, under the direct sway of the Holy Spirit, we reach proficiency in the gifts of counsel, fortitude, godliness, and fear of the Lord. As to the boon of immortality, this privilege is already ours in a natural fashion, at least in regard to the soul. Supernaturally, justified man carries the seed of eternal life within himself, since grace is the beginning of glory. In this the body shares proportionately and in due

measure. Is not his body the temple of the Holy Spirit? Mindful of this distinction, the Church treats the remains of the departed Christian with considerable respect, since the same Holy Spirit, who inhabited the body during life, will prepare it for final restoration and transfiguration, and not leave it subject to unqualified dissolution. The actual principle of this immortality has been implanted into the human body by Christ Himself and as a part of its final glorification. The immortal flesh of the Savior was not subject to corruption, since it shared in the immortality of God by hypostatic union. In this it was exempt from the law of nature which demands disintegration of all human flesh and return to the earth from which it was taken. Adam received immortality of the body as a special privilege and would have transferred it as such to his progeny had not sin changed this supernatural order established by God. In other words: the principle of Adam's privilege was not rooted in his nature, but in grace, and was lost together with grace. Not so with the God-Man. Since the hypostatic union makes the humanity in Christ participate in the nature of Divinity in an essential and necessary manner, the right to all supernatural privileges and the source from which they sprang were embodied in it by virtue of this union. This implies that Christ's sacred body possessed immortality, not just by grace, but by nature as well, and that our participation in Christ's essential life by incorporation must include at least in principle the essential of eternal life for both body and soul. Says St. Paul: "This corruptible body must put on incorruption, and this mortal body must put on immortality. But when this mortal body puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the word that

is written, ‘Death is swallowed up in victory’” (1 Cor. 15:54). To this, St. Irenaeus adds:

Not otherwise could we take on incorruption and immortality than by being joined to life and immortality. But how can we be joined to incorruption and immortality unless incorruption and immortality first becomes what we are, so that what is corruptible may be swallowed up by incorruption and what was mortal by immortality? ⁶

Our present concern centers on the second part of the gift of integrity. We grieve that the full harmony of all our faculties of the soul is not restored. Even the Apostle recognized this fact from personal experience. “I am delighted with the law of God according to the inner man, but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind and making me prisoner to the law of sin that is in my members” (Rom. 7:22–23). There is within us a continual dissension between nature and grace, since there is lacking some of the order and harmony that pertained to Adam’s justice and was a result of integrity, by which grace had been made a close ally of nature, rather than a dissenter. Yet the gift of integrity had only a relative importance in comparison with our state of justice which is governed by grace and charity. Integrity enabled grace to take a deeper root in nature, stabilizing grace, but in the final analysis it was but a means to preserve grace; it did not raise ordinary grace above itself; but in our present condition of incorporation with the God-Man, grace has received a new dignity and a higher degree

⁶ Migne, PG, VII, 939.

of efficacy. Theologians call integrity a disposition for grace; it did not radically include grace within itself, but only prepared for its reception. Besides, this disposition was dependent on grace for its very existence; it was lost when grace was lost and therefore could not serve as a means to recover grace. All this is different in the life-giving union which man enjoys with the God-Man Jesus Christ, particularly when this union is sealed by the sacramental character. This union does more than dispose us for the reception of grace. It demands grace as something to which we have a strict right. Even in the presence of sin this union remains indissoluble and will lead us back into grace the instant sin is removed, as says St. John: "If anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the just; and He is a propitiation for our sins, not for ours only but also for those of the whole world" (1 John 2:2). Concupiscence or an inclination to sin was never effectively removed in our case. This *fomes* or firebrand, as the Council of Trent calls it,⁷ was allowed to remain, as a salutary reminder of our original fall and wretchedness, as an exercise of humility, as a test and trial of our fidelity, and as an occasion of greater merit. Against our will it cannot harm us, for it can be overcome or at least regulated by the aid to which baptismal grace gives us a special and incontestable right. Beholding His first-born Son linked to us in such living union as the grace of redemption affords us, the heavenly Father cannot remain indifferent to our plight. He must protect us against ourselves, and this regardless of or rather in the face of the disorder persisting in our nature. In fact, nowhere do we encounter a more solid proof of God's

⁷ Sess. V, n. 5.

wisdom and divine providence than when He dispenses with integrity and allows man's native weakness to remain within him to serve its own purpose. For thus we are forced to have recourse to the grace which is imbedded in us through Christ our Lord, with the result that our weakness becomes a tower of strength in Jesus Christ, as our Lord said to St. Paul: "My grace is sufficient for thee, for strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9).

When we thus consider Christ as the meritorious cause of our justification under its double aspects, we are much reminded of the fact that faith in Christ constitutes our greatest asset. St. Paul makes a decided issue of faith and the justice of faith. "Having been justified by faith, let us have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we also have access by faith unto that grace in which we stand, and exult in the hope of the glory of the sons of God" (Rom. 5:1-2). The Apostle, no doubt, is following up the thought that we neither produce justification in ourselves nor merit it, but are to expect it from God's grace and mercy through the merits of Jesus Christ. He definitely emphasizes the necessity of a living faith, one which is not satisfied with simply being attached to God, but advances to action. This too is dependent on grace, which by its very nature must grow and develop and bring forth fruits worthy of faith. "For His workmanship we are, created in Christ Jesus in good works, which God has made ready beforehand that we may walk in them" (Eph. 2:10). But most of all, he points at the interior renovation of justified man as the result of divine activity, not immediately but immediately. This state of habitual grace, the grace in which we stand, is the supernatural virtue of

charity and the grace of divine sonship by incorporation. This interior renewal and supernatural transformation is perceived by faith, and then only in limited measure. Faith of this kind devolves into a living trust which much resembles the faith that our Lord required during His mortal life whenever He unfolded His miraculous power. It is clearly evident that, if a man can point at no merits or, even when equipped with such, calls for an extraordinary manifestation of God's power, he can base his action only on a living trust and faith in God's loving kindness, an acknowledgment of His infinite might, and an appeal to His promises. By faith man clasps God to himself, draws down the divine power, and applies it to himself. The importance of such faith is so great that the faithful of the Old Testament could, by belief in the coming Redeemer, anticipate the efficacy of His merits. After the redemption, special external organs of God's supernatural activity in the sphere of grace were instituted by Christ, organs designed by our Lord to transmit the marvelous effect of grace to the subjects. Such are the sacraments, which are our prime means of sanctification in the New Dispensation. The inundation of grace, which came to man through the instrumentality of Christ's own physical presence while on earth, is thus continued through the ages, passing from Christ's divinity and through His humanity into the chosen channels of grace. If the subject is capable of a personal cooperation in the matter of his salvation, and wishes to share in the efficacy of these sacraments, he must approach them with faith in Jesus Christ, and transfer their power to himself by the same faith.

At this particular juncture, the sacrament of penance calls our attention, since grave sins committed after bap-

tism cannot be disposed of and forgiven unless through the instrumentality of this sacrament, received either actually or in desire. In other words, the present petition of the *Our Father* will not obliterate mortal sin, unless man be disposed to employ the means designated by our Lord to efface them.

Our Lord hates sin, although He shows infinite mercy in regard to the sinner. This mystery of darkness and evil which we call sin, which runs afoul of the law of God and violates the order decreed by God, which refuses love and obedience to a loving God and deprives Him of His honor, finds its culmination when a child of God disavows his intimate and exalted relationship which existed between him and God as a child of adoption, and exchanges it for fellowship with the devil. A sinner rebels against the eternal Father who in His Son has also become a Father to him. He dishonors the Son, whose image was stamped upon him by baptism, and according to whose example he was to guard the most intimate and holy bond of charity with the Father. He resists the Holy Spirit who joined him to the Father and the Son in living union. In a word, he disrupts the Blessed Trinity in as far as the unchangeable order of the divine persons among themselves was externally reproduced in his soul, and continued in the order of grace. If we would be only able to see sin the way Christ sees it, as our Lord saw it that evening in the Garden when He cried to His heavenly Father for mercy! Cardinal Newman describes this terrible moment in the most touching manner.

There in the most awful hour knelt the Savior of the world. There He knelt motionless and still, while the vile and horrible fiend clad His spirit in a robe

steeped in all that is hateful and heinous in human crime, which clung close round His heart, and filled His conscience, and found its way into every sense and pore of His mind, and spread over Him a moral leprosy, till He almost felt Himself to be that what He never could be, and which His foe would fain have made Him. Oh, the horror when He looked and did not know Himself, and felt as a foul and loathsome sinner. All those sins of all generations are upon Him, they are all but His own. He cries to His Father as if He were the criminal, not the victim. His agony takes the form of guilt and compunction. "Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me, but not My will but Thy be done." He is the one victim for us all, the sole satisfaction, the real penitent, all but the real sinner.⁸

St. Paul sums it up in one sentence: "For our sakes God made Him to be sin who knew nothing of sin, so that in Him we might become the justice of God" (2 Cor. 5:21).

The sacrament of penance, instituted by Christ to apply the fruits of His passion and death on the cross, is a monument of His thoughtfulness. It has the direct purpose of expelling evil and all that is connected with evil from him who receives the sacrament. Its primary objective is medicinal, and this precisely so in as far as sin and the consequences of sin are an obstacle to the supernatural development of the interior life of the soul. In this respect it does not affect men in general, but only those who have been baptized. It works upon the subject from the standpoint of his existing and organic union with Christ, and in order to be complete, must return to man that grace and favor

⁸ *Meditations and Devotions* (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1953), "The Agony of Christ."

which was his before he sinned. He must again be clothed with the garment of God's children, with the splendor of God's own nature and glory. The living union with Christ, which was disrupted by sin, must be re-established or, if it concerns venial sin, the existing life union, which was marred in limited fashion, must be readjusted.

Wherever we find traces of error, we have the unmistakable evidence that humans were at work. Says St. James: "In many things we all offend" (Jas. 3:2). St. John adds: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8). The Council of Trent goes so far as to place an anathema on those who claim that it is possible to avoid all sin, even venial sin, without a special privilege from God, such as was granted to the Blessed Virgin Mary.⁹ There are, however, mistakes and mistakes. Mistakes in the human order seldom involve irretrievable consequences. Generally man can and does remedy his common errors of life and, if he fails in the first attempt, will try again. Of a vastly different nature are his spiritual errors. Fatal mistakes in the supernatural order involve fatal consequences to the effect that mortal sin destroys the very principle of supernatural life. Once that supernatural fire of sanctifying grace has been extinguished in the soul, it takes a miracle of grace to rekindle it. The unpleasant danger of sin hinges on the innate fallacy of human judgment, whether this be brought about by ignorance, malice, or lack of mental calculation. "If anyone thinks that he knows anything," says St. Paul, "he has not yet known as he ought to know" (1 Cor. 8:2). King Solomon remarked centuries before:

⁹ Sess. VI, can. 23.

The thoughts of mortal man are fearful, and our counsels uncertain. For the corruptible body is a load upon the soul, and the earthly habitation presses down the mind that muses upon many things. And hardly do we guess aright at things that are upon earth: and with labor do we find the things that are before us (*Wisdom 9:14-16*).

Add to this the lust of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life, and we have the usual picture of the average man. It may well be summed up by the dreary statement of one who remarked that the life of each of us is a diary in which we mean to write one story, but write another. Our humblest hour is when we compare the volume as is, with what we had vowed to make it. Such is life, and our misery. Yet, we are still better off than the animals which cannot make mistakes, or the angels who could make a mistake only once. Given the infinite mercy of a loving Father, through the merits of a redeeming Savior, we always have a second chance to change our mind and the sorry object of our affections.

Like a new lease on life must have sounded the words spoken by our Lord to Magdalene, "Thy sins are forgiven. . . . Thy faith has saved thee" (*Luke 7:49; 50*). There was indeed an intimation of the sacrament in the kind way our Lord dealt with sinners. "Has no one condemned thee? Neither will I condemn thee. Go thy way, and from now on sin no more" (*John 8:10*). A formal promise of the sacrament our Lord made at Caesarea Philippi, when he said to Peter: "I will give thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever thou shalt loose on earth

shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. 16:19). The other disciples were made participants of the same power when, late on the day of His resurrection, our Lord appeared, breathed upon them, and said: "Receive the Holy Spirit; whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained" (John 20:23). When our Lord cured the paralytic at Capharnaum and forgave him his sins, the Scribes and Pharisees murmured and said, "Who can forgive sins, but God alone?" (Luke 5:21). In fact, sins are forgiven only by God, since sins are offenses against the Almighty, and He alone can forgive them. But by divine decree the explicit right to forgive sins has become the privilege of Christ, because of His claim on the human race as Redeemer. Said our Lord:

The Son gives life to whom He will. Neither does the Father judge any man, but all judgment has been given to the Son, that all men may honor the Son even as they honor the Father . . . Amen, amen, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is here, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear shall live. For as the Father has life in Himself, even so He has given to the Son to have life in Himself: and He has granted Him power to render judgment, because He is the Son of Man (John 5:21-27).

The traditional picture of Christ on the cross represents our Lady on one side, St. John on the other. By both, the place of honor is yielded to Mary Magdalene, the penitent sinner. Peter, the chosen disciple who denied our Lord, returned to grace by a loving look of the Master. Had Judas not despaired of our Lord's mercy, we would have

churches dedicated today to the fallen apostle, even as we have churches consecrated to the memory of St. Peter and Mary Magdalene. God is merciful and will forgive any sin if we are truly sorry, for a sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit, and a contrite and humbled heart God will not despise (Ps. 50:19). This much must be said for the sacrament. But it likewise holds true outside of the sacrament, when we repeat the present petition with grief and sorrow for past transgressions. Particularly venial sins may be canceled precisely by this petition, which has been called a daily remedy, a daily cleansing. Says St. Augustine:

Those who are baptized and remain in this life are afflicted in some way by mortal weakness, so that even if they are not shipwrecked, they ought to keep bailing out the bilge water. For if this is not checked, it will little by little submerge the ship. To make the prayer of this petition, is to keep pumping out the bilge water.¹⁰

St. Thomas indicates that this prayer is a symbol of hope, because we are confident that despite our sins, if we turn to God with the right dispositions, He will forgive us.¹¹

It is well to remember that this petition is not unconditional, for we pray: forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. The wording prescribed by our Lord may be taken in two ways. It either has the force of a comparison, meaning that we ask God to be forgiven to the measure and the degree in which we apply the principle of mercy. Or it denotes a strict condition, indicating

¹⁰ *Opera omnia* (Paris, 1842), XVIII, 183.

¹¹ *Sermones et opuscula*, p. 143.

the necessary disposition which the sinner must have to obtain forgiveness. The last sense was preferred by our Lord, when He said: "If you forgive men their offenses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you your offenses. But if you do not forgive men, neither will your Father forgive you your offenses" (Matt. 6:14-15). Both interpretations equally imply the necessity of forgiveness on our part, so much so that God will reject the plea of mercy when a person declines to show similar regard for his neighbor, not as though this disposition of ours, or the remission we make, suffices, as some heretics would have it, but because without that disposition a man cannot have true sorrow for his sins. Nor can it ever be considered a mere counsel, such as we may take or leave and still have a chance to merit forgiveness. The parable of the unmerciful servant, related in St. Matthew, fully illustrates God's attitude. The matter of the ten thousand talents, to which our Lord refers, in relation to the hundred denarii of the fellow servant, which the man refused to remit, emphasizes the contrast between the debts which we owe God and the ones by which our neighbor is indebted to us. Our least offense against God weighs incomparably more in the balance of faith than does the greatest possible injury we may sustain from our neighbor. Even the law of nature demands that we act toward others as we want others to act toward us. Besides, we have the weight of a positive command. "If thy brother sin, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if seven times in the day he sin against thee, and seven times in the day turn back to thee, saying, 'I repent,' forgive him" (Luke 17:3-4). The sermon of the Mount fairly stresses the same doctrine.

You have heard that it was said, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and shalt hate thy enemy." But I say to you, love thy enemies, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who persecute and calumniate you, so that you may be the children of your Father in heaven, who makes the sun to rise on the good and the evil, and sends rain on the just and the unjust (Matt. 5:43-45).

The present petition has often been referred to as the prayer of fraternal charity. In this respect St. Augustine remarks: "Make your prayer against the malice of your enemy, that his malice may die and he may live. For if your enemy should die, you lose as it were an enemy, but you have not found a friend. If however his malice should die, you have lost an enemy and found a friend."¹² One of the strongest proofs of our willingness to be true children of God is our desire to love our neighbor as we desire to be loved by him. In this manner the petition becomes an infallible guarantee of mercy and a most powerful opportunity to approach the example of our Lord who, in His last moments on the cross, did not hesitate to pray for those who had crucified Him: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34).

In all this, we are strengthened by the infused virtue of fortitude, and by the gift of the same name. The most substantial benefit derived from this gift is the ability to recognize our inborn dislike to overlook personal slights and lack of attention. But in the sight of this weakness we find within ourselves the determination to do what is right, even if loving our neighbor means the cutting off our

¹² *Opera Omnia* (Paris, 1842), XVIII, 186.

arm or the plucking out an eye. Thus St. Stephen, the first martyr, was able to follow our Lord's example and give his life while praying for those who shed his blood because, full of the Holy Spirit, he looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. "And falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'Lord, do not lay this sin against them'" (Acts 7:60).

In conclusion, be it remarked that we must not go to the other extreme, and hesitate to repeat this petition when we find it difficult to recant personal feelings and forgive our neighbor, as St. Augustine aptly notes:

They are wrong who say that a man who does not forgive injuries ought not to use this petition when reciting the *Our Father*. For if a man has at least the desire to gain the grace to forgive injuries, then his prayer is not evil but fruitful. But if he fails to have even this desire, then his prayer is a sorry prayer indeed.¹³

¹³ *De Civitate Dei*, notes by Wm. G. Most (Washington, D. C.: Catholic Education Press, 1949), chap. XVII. Cf. Father Thomas Burke, S.J., in *American Ecclesiastical Review*, CXIII, 3-4, for valuable data on the Lord's Prayer.

Lead Us Not into Temptation

SACRED SCRIPTURE uses temptation in two distinct denotations. Speaking generally, the word points at a test or trial such as is used to determine a person's reactions or gauge his character. In this sense we read that God tempted Abraham, saying, "Take thy only begotten son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and go into the land of vision: and there thou shalt offer him for an holocaust upon one of the mountains which I will show thee" (Gen. 22:2). On account of a previous commitment on the part of God and a formal promise that Abraham would be blessed in Isaac and in his seed, the divine command was strange, not to say provoking. It very definitely pointed at a test of Abraham's unrestricted fidelity and implicit trust in God who, as the Baptist would later testify, is able out of stones to raise up children to Abraham (Matt. 3:9). Trials of a slightly different nature were determined for Job. Also Tobias was tried, and the Angel explained to him: "Because thou wast acceptable to God, it was necessary that temptation should prove thee" (Tob. 12:13). In like manner God is said to tempt His own, when He afflicts them with want and infirmity and kindred mishaps, as it is written: "The

Lord your God tries you, that it may appear whether you love Him or not" (Deut. 13:3). Or again, in the words of King Solomon: "As silver is tried by fire, and gold in the furnace: so the Lord tries the hearts" (Prov. 17:3).

Temptation's second and most current meaning is to provoke and lead one to evil. Such precisely is the role of the devil, who tempts men with the sole purpose of seducing them and driving them to ruin. At no time can it be said that God tempts us in this manner, as remarks St. James: "Let no man say when he is tempted that he is tempted by God; for God is no tempter to evil, and He Himself tempts no one" (Jas. 1:13). The reader has sensed the difficulty. In this sixth petition of the *Our Father*, we ask definitely to be delivered from temptations of the second sort, which would almost seem to imply that, at one time or other, God were leading us into temptation to evil, the very thought of which is blasphemous. The explanation, however, is plain. "Lead us not into temptation" is a mode of speech, not uncommon in Sacred Scripture, to denote permission rather than positive action on the part of God. When He allows temptation to take hold of us without redress, He tolerates temptation rather than causes it. When God refuses necessary graces in time of temptation, He cannot be said to cause sin, just as the absence of light cannot be said to bring about darkness. We must rather say that where there is no light, there is darkness; and where there is no grace in time of temptation, sin is certain to follow. The refusal of grace on God's part is thus a negative action, which God may apply for several reasons, such as to humble or punish us. In this manner it is written: "God has given them up to a

reprobate sense, so that they do what is not fitting" (Rom. 1:28). Our prayer, therefore, is a cry for help or mercy, as the case may be, by which we ask God not to refuse us His graces when needed most.

The necessity of this petition is by no means illusory. Our spiritual enemies are legion, some working from within, others from without. There are the powers embodied in our fallen nature, such as ignorance, pride, and concupiscence. Of these we spoke in a preceding chapter as the natural imperfections which make inroad in human nature by virtue of the union of spirit and matter, and which have become a shameful defilement of humanity since Adam lost the supernatural endowment of integrity by original sin. We shall easily understand the necessity of God's help to overcome the almost inevitable languor of the flesh, of which our Lord warned His chosen disciples in the Garden of Gethsemani: "Watch and pray, that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matt. 26:41). What more striking example of human weakness can be found than in the sacred college of Apostles who, witnessing our Lord's seizure shortly after, were struck with terror and fled in a body? Even more lamentable is the action of Peter who, almost immediately after his magnanimous statement that he would die with our Lord rather than deny Him, failed his Master, and confirmed to the maidservant of Caiphas' court that he did not know the man (Matt. 26:74). If holy men were thus betrayed by nature, what can we expect from those who are far below them in sanctity?

Next is the influence of the outside world, largely Christian in name, but growing increasingly more materialistic.

Christian principles can not long survive when Christ Himself is rejected. When old-fashioned virtues are replaced by economy, and material progress and efficiency are proclaimed national virtues, we are but reaping the logical fruits of a heresy which considers prosperity in this life the best possible indication of salvation in the next. The world is in its present agony because it has failed to understand that the lamp of Western civilization, which was lighted by the Catholic Church, needs to be constantly tended, or it will go out forever. It is because men have refused to do God's bidding to put justice and charity where it belongs, that is, before expediency and gain, that the world has no peace and cannot have peace, because peace is found only in Christian principles and morality, as the angels sang over Bethlehem: "Peace on earth among men of good will" (Luke 2:14). This is the world in which we find ourselves. With all our Catholic training and doctrine, we are bound to be contaminated by this pagan atmosphere to the extent that we likewise endeavor to serve two masters, which proves impossible, psychologically as well as on the authority of revelation.

Least of all can we discount the temptations caused by the demons, of which the Apostle testifies: "Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the Principalities and the Powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness on high" (Eph. 6:12). There is a terrible and mysterious battle going on between heaven and hell, between light and darkness, holiness and godlessness, between supernatural grace and devilish stratagem, with mankind the scene and the object of the battle. It is the fury of the fallen

angels, who envy man his heavenly treasure of grace which they have lost, and seek to enmesh him in the net of evil and wickedness in which they themselves were caught, lest man prove successful in his quest of supernatural happiness and succeed to the place in heaven from which they were ejected. The Apostle calls them principalities and powers in their own right, apart from their former angelic rank, because of the excellence of their nature, which makes them superior to men and to all visible creation. He calls them powers, because of the extraordinary influence they have on things created, although such power is subject to God's direct control and permission. He calls them world-rulers of this darkness, because theirs is a reign of death, a reign of mortal sin, which expels God's light and glory from the earth as effectively as night effaces day. Sin has changed the face of the earth. Where formerly there was absolute happiness in a free and loving service of God, a reign of terror has been set up alongside by the prince of darkness. His was a sin of pride, as Sacred Scripture indicates. But his was also a sin of envy in respect to man. Says St. Thomas:

The envious man grieves over the good possessed by another inasmuch as he deems his neighbor's good a hindrance to his own. But another's good could not be deemed a hindrance to the good coveted by the wicked angel, except inasmuch as he coveted a singular excellence, which would cease to be singular because of the excellence of some other. So, after the sin of pride, there followed the evil of envy in the sining angel, whereby he grieved over man's good, and also over the divine excellence, according

as against the devil's will God makes use of man
for the divine glory.¹

The preceding reminds us of the previous proposition, advocated by several Fathers, that the future incarnation of the Son of God was made known to him. Hence Lucifer, the Bearer of Light, became Satan, the great adversary of God and men, the prince of darkness, who set up an empire of his own, to which all those flocked and swore fealty who preferred to subject themselves to one of their own in a war against God and His Anointed. This is the mystery of iniquity, of which St. Paul speaks, which is no less than the persistent effort of the devil to destroy grace, evoke in man an estrangement from and a rebellion against grace in order to extinguish the fire which our Lord came to cast upon earth. Several passages throughout the Bible confirm the secret machinations of the evil one, but in the Old Testament they indicate little more than the existence of a principle of evil, jealous of the human race. It was reserved to the New Testament to render a final and clear-cut picture of an open warfare between two spiritual realms, a conflict between the Kingdom of Christ and that of Satan. Our Lord termed him the prince of the world (John 14:30). St. Peter speaks of him as a roaring lion, going about seeking someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8). St. Paul names him the most wicked one (Eph. 6:16). This battle between good and evil began in Paradise and has raged on through the centuries, growing gradually in momentum, to the point where a mutual traffic in evil has been set up between fallen spirits and men, which found its deepest

¹ *Summa Theologica*, Ia, q. 63, a. 2.

ignominy when the Jews joined in with the devil's scheme to destroy the Son of Man. This scheme having failed, and realizing that he could destroy not even the mortal, human nature in Christ permanently, Satan has turned to man, who carries the glorious image of the God-Man within himself, persecuting him, not just because man is destined to take his place in heaven, but first and foremost because he is a member of the body of God's Son. Satan's implacable rage against human nature is plainly evident among primitive peoples, whom the devil has treacherously inveigled to pay homage to him instead of to God with a cult of foul vice in its most unnatural forms, demanding rituals of the deepest degradation and moral shame. More bitterly still does he persecute the human race in the person of those who have joined themselves to Christ, and who in turn seek to destroy the empire of hell in themselves and others. This accounts for the systematic attack against Christianity in general, and against the Catholic Church in particular, because the latter was founded by Christ and carries within herself the very blessings and graces merited by the God-Man. When we look at the atrocities of formal persecution to which some members of Christ's Church are subjected today, as they have been through the centuries, we realize that this does not constitute a simple hatred of one's fellow man, but a diabolical hatred of the God-Man whom these members represent and formulate by their Christian life and convictions.

The Apostle finally calls them the spiritual forces of wickedness on high. In this respect, we recall what St. Thomas teaches about the specific kinds of sin. There are sins of the spirit and sins of the flesh. The latter are

excluded from the demons since a spiritual nature cannot be affected by such pleasures as pertain to the body. They can, however, contract the actual guilt of such sins, by leading men into them.² It is at once evident that sins of the spirit are of greater consequence than sins of the body, since the former consist in evil purposes and depraved desires which affect the superior part of the soul. Not that sins of the body are to be underrated. They have a tendency to debauch the higher faculties and reduce man to the status of the lowly animal. The devil is able to tempt us to either, thus leading men into sins which he himself cannot commit, as well as into sins of the spirit, showing his fearful power and influence which comprises both body and soul. From all this, we may form some more or less adequate notion of the enemy's strength, his matchless acumen, and his dogged persistence in the manner of war he wages against us, because we are children of God and brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ. Sometimes demons combine in crowds to tempt man, as was acknowledged by the unclean spirit, who conceded that his name was Legion, for they were many (Mark 5:9). Something similar was mentioned by our Lord, who spoke about the unclean spirit which had gone out of a man and later returned, taking with him seven other spirits more evil than himself, and re-entering they dwelled there; and the last state of that man became worse than the first (Matt. 12:45). Nor has the devil regard of person or place, once he has set his mind on perverting the individual. He attacked our first parents in Paradise; he assailed the Prophets of old as well as the Apostles, seeking to sift them as wheat (Luke

² *Summa Theologica*, Ia, q. 63, a. 2.

22:31); he did not even respect the presence and person of our Lord, who was led into the desert, to be tempted by the devil (Matt. 4:1). Such is the constant battle between right and wrong, justice and malice, between God and the devil, a struggle which has raged since the foundation of the world and will continue until the last day when "the wicked one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will slay with the breath of His mouth and will destroy with the brightness of His coming" (2 Thes. 2:8).

In all this we are reminded that no temptation takes hold of us but such as man is equal to. Says St. Paul: "God is faithful and will not permit you to be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also give you a way out that you may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. 10:13). Mindful of this, we do not want courage, for the devil, in spite of all his power, his pertinacity, his morbid hatred of the human race, can tempt and torment us neither as long nor as much as he would wish. Moreover, God is on our side. In view of His grace, which is ours for the asking, it is evident that our present petition does not aim at demanding unqualified exemption from temptation. St. Augustine remarks: "Our prayer here is not that we should not be tempted, but that we should not be swept up in the temptation; just as someone who must be tested by fire, does not pray that he should not be touched by the fire, but that he should not be burned."³ One who would want to be free from temptation must be free from himself and from all outside influence which could prove harmful, a privilege which was not given to even the greatest saints. In fact, it is often advantageous and useful to be tempted.

³ *Opera Omnia*, XIV, 229.

For one thing, temptations train us in the difficult art of self-inspection, render us an opportunity to arrive at a more comprehensive knowledge of our tendencies and inclinations, and spur us on to greater vigilance. They are also a sign that the devil does not like us; this is of all things most encouraging. Meanwhile the continued insistence of temptation may well be an indication that we have not as yet succumbed, for why should the devil continue his efforts if we have already freely surrendered. But the greatest and most valuable benefit derived from temptation is the increasingly keener perception of our weakness and inability to cope with them successfully by dint of our own effort. Thus we humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt us in the time of visitation, casting all our anxiety upon Him, because He cares for us (1 Peter 5:6-7). Prayers are their own reward, inasmuch as nothing that we might obtain in answer to our prayers could excel in value the familiar converse with God which prayer defines. Thus even temptation becomes a blessing in disguise, a welcome occasion to seek God's sanctifying nearness, a means to receive special graces, all of which would have been wanting had the pressure of temptation been wanting. Our Lord knows the great good which comes from prayer and from the need we have to pray. God welcomes every opportunity to help, so much so that He thinks Himself betrayed by the man who, when he finds himself surrounded by temptations, does not run to Him for assistance. Thus we pray that we may not yield to our passions, so as to turn away from the Lord and be conquered by weakness. We pray that the number of temptations may not discourage us, nor their vileness soil our

virtue. Above all, we pray that God's wisdom be with us and labor on our side, that we may know at any time what is agreeable in His sight and right in His commandments. In this connection it is well to remember that the presence of God within us, is of faith. We do not need to go beyond our hearts to find God and, with God, the needed grace to weather the onset. Of all things, we have no greater guarantee of victory in temptation than God's loving presence, for temptation is as much God's cause as it is ours. It is God's cause, because the devil's concern about our possible doom is definitely secondary. Being unable to hurt God directly in His person, the devil's primary aim is to hurt Him in His creature. As to us, temptations furnish us with an opportunity to take a stand in defense of God's sanctity and unblemished holiness against Satan and his fawning followers. Here the gift of piety especially makes its appearance, having us realize our true obligations in regard to God. These obligations find their foundation in the heart rather than in the mind, for piety means loyalty, faithfulness, the state of being enwrapped in the welfare of someone else. Whenever we are tempted, God's honor is placed in our hands, for the devil is aiming to use us as a tool to harm God. This he does with all the more cunning and infernal hatred when the person has been marked with the blood of the Lamb, and is incorporated in Christ. If we ever have an opportunity to show our gratitude for God's infinite love and mercy, as expressed in the economy of the redemption, we shall with the grace of God foil every effort of Satan, lest he frustrate the passion of God's beloved Son in our regard. Nor will God fail to secure victory unto eternal reward, as it is written: "Blessed is the

man who endures temptation; for when he has been tried, he will receive the crown of life which God has promised to those who love Him" (Jas. 1:12).

At this place it seems feasible to add some notes about the relationship of temptation and sin, in order to clear up an almost universal confusion. Although everyone knows that temptation in itself is not sinful, yet in practice two classes of persons are frequently misled about the morality of their temptations. Those of a timid conscience take simple temptation for the sin itself, while those of a lax conscience fail to see sin where temptations are actually censurable. For the benefit of both and to prevent any misunderstanding on the part of either, we must draw a clear distinction between temptation and sin.⁴

Theologians, following St. Gregory, distinguish three degrees in temptation, namely suggestion, pleasure, and consent. It may be well to remember from the outset that the whole of the unpleasant matter of doubt in either of the divisions pivots on the free consent of the will, because without free consent no sin is possible in any instance.

Turning to the initial stage of temptation, we meet with the simple suggestion or representation of something evil to the mind. It is indeed an invitation, an attraction, sometimes a violent solicitation to evil; yet of itself it is not a sin, since it may arise in us without our cooperation and in spite of us. If we find ourselves unexpectedly assailed by evil thoughts, imaginations, and representations, whether they proceed from our own corrupt nature, or from the suggestions of the devil, no sin is involved when such takes

⁴ Cf. Father Angelo Raineri, *A Compendium of Catechetical Instruction*, "The sixth petition of the Lord's Prayer."

place without actual concurrence of the will. As a matter of fact, the absence of guilt is quite evident, when the suggestions and representations come to us inadvertently. But the situation assumes a different guise when such temptations are incited by our own free will. It is one thing to claim immunity from guilt because temptations are inevitable, and quite another to assume innocence when temptations were not immediately rejected or even purposely invited and promoted. The same must be said in regard to objectionable matter which is brought to our attention. To come by chance on seductive and dangerous objects which captivate the eyes, and to derive a bad impression from them, is a matter of sad necessity for every man who has to live in the world; but to gaze on such objects with curiosity, to contemplate them leisurely even after their danger has become apparent, most of all to seek those objects purposely, gives indication and proof of a perverse will. These latter temptations are not exempt from fault. And if the temptation to which we give occasion is fraught with danger of sin, the temptation itself is sin, grave if the matter or danger is grave, light if the matter or danger is slight and of small consequence. For the same law that forbids sin, also forbids us to expose ourselves to the proximate danger of committing it.

In regard to the pleasure which temptation involves, a corresponding observation must be made. The fascination naturally produced in us by evil suggestion is one thing; delight freely accepted and retained for its own sake is another. It is quite possible, even certain, that the mere thought and suggestion of something inordinate can cause a natural and pleasurable reaction. How very easy is it to

experience a sudden emotion of gratification at the first thought of vengeance, of sure but unjust gain, or of some sensual satisfaction. But such delight is only a human sensation, a natural appetite, an involuntary passion, beyond the power of the will, just as it is beyond the power of our will to experience the heat when we come near a fire. To make such delight sinful, it must be freely accepted in its proper character of evil suggestion. Beyond that, it is merely a human reaction, and will remain so, until we have fully realized its sinful implications. Such advertence may be slow in coming because of the intensity of the momentary emotion; but until it has arrived, there can be no deliberation, and without free deliberation, again sin is impossible. To decide whether the delectation is really voluntary, we must see whether we advert to it, and how we behave after we have made this reflection. If we interiorly enter into ourselves, realize its sinful implications, and try to banish the bad impression, we are fighting the good fight, even though the evil impression remains present for some time, or returns on the spot the moment it has been effectively expelled. As long as we would prefer to be free from the temptation, feel distressed at its continuance or return, there is definite indication that we are not in it with heart and soul, that our will is in opposition; and as long as our will has not gone into agreement, there can be no question of sin. If, on the other hand, after having given the matter sufficient reflection, we allow ourselves to be overcome by the delectation, if we freely entertain it, relish it, taste it with pleasure, if, in order to enjoy it, we continue the wicked thoughts that gave rise to it, we have a clear-cut case of voluntary delectation which can no longer be called

a surprise, a passing emotion, or the result of sudden passion. In such instance we have a free complacency of the will, a delectation which theologians call morose, not because of the length of time the sinful object is enjoyed, but because of the voluntary delay in repelling the temptation which should have been rejected forthwith and abandoned immediately. Although this delay be of the briefest, even of a single instant, sin makes its entrance at once and is of the grave or light variety according to its nature. Hence, supposing the matter is grave—as is always the case with sins against purity—if knowledge and deliberation are fully present, the sin is mortal; if, however, knowledge and deliberation are only partly present, or again, if one does not wish positively to take pleasure in it, but delays action in banishing the temptation, the guilt will be venial.

When the evil thought or design has been cherished in the mind with full complacency, we pass on to the third stage of temptation, which completes the sin. It is called consent because the will has effectively encompassed the evil purpose. Nor is the external act necessary to complete the evil design. The malice has fully reached its consummation in the interior act. Thus summarizing the entire doctrine concerning temptation, we find that the will consents by performing the censurable action to which it is incited by the temptation. Even without accomplishing the sinful act, it consents by consciously desiring it. Again, even without either accomplishing or desiring it, it consents by taking full pleasure in it. In addition, it must be said that, even without accomplishing, desiring, or taking pleasure in the evil intent, the mere consent to expose oneself to the proximate danger of all this is already sinful.

For God, in forbidding evil, also forbids the desire of it and the complacency in it, together with the near danger of both one and the other. In order to avoid both extremes in the matter—that of exaggerated fear on the one hand, and of excessive laxity on the other—it should be carefully borne in mind that the sin does not lie in feeling, but in consent. To feel temptation or not to feel it does not depend on us, whereas it does depend on us to give free consent. Hence we sin neither by the vivid character of the picture presented to the imagination, nor by the duration of the temptation, nor by the intensity of the emotions, but simply and solely by the free and deliberate act of the will. Applying these rules to our own case, and supposing that we find ourselves constantly assailed by impure thoughts, representations, and imaginations, even assuming that we experience within ourselves a moderate degree of complacency, desire, and disorderly emotion beyond reasonable control of the will, we need not worry, for the evil is confined to the senses only. Rather than be confused by the issue, we must turn within ourselves and ask God for added strength to bear the painful assault with patience, lest we lose, even in part, the generous opportunity for merit.

Mindful of the preceding principles, a final word may be added about the general means of conquering temptations. Our Lord has summarized them in two words: watch and pray. The two must go hand in hand, because they fully contain the whole economy of divine grace and of our liberty of action. In point of order, vigilance comes first, as says St. Paul: "Do not give place to the devil" (Eph. 4:27). This cannot be accomplished otherwise than

by zealous custody of the senses, by flight of sloth and idleness, by avoidance of dangerous occasions, by carefully watching our particular weaknesses which are able to furnish an incentive to temptation. For, if we wish to give unrestrained liberty to our senses, to look at each and every object, to read all manner of unqualified material, we can hardly expect to avoid dangerous situations which will result in temptation. But if we, regardless of due care and precaution, find ourselves tempted, our next move is to reject temptation quickly and without delay, even at the very moment that we notice its uninvited presence. An object that we ought not to behold with the eyes of the body, must not be contemplated with the eyes of the soul. Besides, even simple negligence in rejecting temptations is not free from fault, particularly when it concerns chastity, for we are on the verge of sin.

While it is thus necessary to be continually on guard lest temptations enter the heart, and to combat them at once after they have entered, we must not rely exclusively on our own initiative. For this reason our Lord gave us the combined admonition: to watch and pray. It is of faith that we can do nothing without the grace of God. But the means of obtaining grace is prayer, a means so indispensable that its place cannot be supplied in any other way. The more frequent, stubborn, and dangerous the attacks to which we are exposed, the more assiduous and fervent must be our prayer. For wherever there are temptations, there is danger; but the greatest danger of all is to neglect prayer, when prayer and grace are our only salvation.

Deliver Us from Evil

THE seventh and last petition deserves special notice, for in the present life our wretchedness is great and the dangers that assail us in body and soul are many. Job, in his classic remark, reminds us of this wretchedness. "Man born of a woman, living for a short time, is filled with many miseries. Who comes forth like a flower, and is destroyed, and flees as a shadow, and never continues in the same state" (Job 14:1-2). The Apostle warned the first Christians repeatedly that through many tribulations they were to enter into the kingdom of God (Acts 14:21), as he also reminded his friend Timothy: "All who want to live piously in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12). Here is St. Paul's own experience.

From the Jews five times I received forty lashes less one. Thrice I was scourged, once I was stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I was adrift on the sea. In perils from floods, in perils from robbers, in perils from my own nation, in perils from the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils from false brethren; in labor and hardships, in many sleep-

less nights, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness (2 Cor. 11:24-27).

If this were not enough, he humbly confessed that there was given him a thorn for the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to buffet him. Concerning this, he thrice besought the Lord that it might leave him. But the Lord answered: "My grace is sufficient for thee, for strength is made perfect in infirmity" (2 Cor. 12:9).

The Litany of the Saints enumerates a great many misfortunes from which the Church asks her children to be delivered. There are lightning and tempest, earthquake, pestilence, famine and war, strife and hatred and self-will, the spirit of impurity, and many other evils. To these we add a few of our own, and include riches, honors, health, strength, and life itself, if such blessings are perverted to evil purpose and turned into dangers which are able to ruin the soul. We ask to be delivered, even more earnestly, from ignorance, pride, and concupiscence. Ignorance, which affects the understanding, makes us confound evil with good, inducing us to look at transitory things with the eyes of the world, causing us to judge them according to the standards of time, not according to the standards of eternity. Pride and concupiscence, which haunt the will, cause us to be desirous of things that war against the law of God, make us prisoners to the law of sin which is in our members. But instead of enumerating them all, we ask to be delivered from evil in general rather than from any specific evil. This eliminates the possibility of making a mistake in judgment. Sin excepted, all other things are in themselves neither good nor bad. In individual cases they may be conducive to virtue, they may be conducive

to sin. We readily understand that miseries, sickness, and afflictions of various kinds could be intended to act as so many graces which God, in His mercy, sends us by way of expiation for past sins, or as a preventive of future transgressions, or simply as an occasion to effect greater sanctity and union with God. Being unable to discern what is useful for our own good, what is advantageous, even necessary, we rather leave the final choice to God, thus obviating the chance that we would ask for the deliverance from evils which happen to be blessings in disguise.

If we are to single out one of the many evils that come our way, we must point to the harm done by lukewarmness in the service of God, because of the intrinsic malice of this evil. Obviously our vocation is to general perfection, at least to relative perfection in our God-given state of life. When we are given to mediocrity and are satisfied with doing as little as possible to further our union with God, we are undermining the very purpose of our vocation as a Christian, let alone the vocation which some of us have as priests and religious. St. Alphonsus distinguishes between an indeliberate and a voluntary state of this evil.¹ The former we cannot avoid, because it is a direct result of original sin and coincides with certain flaws in spiritual life which God allows even in His saints to keep them meek and humble and trustful of God. We find ourselves without fervor, wearied, and wandering in our exercises of devotion without being able to locate the cause. We feel little encouragement to repel distractions in prayer; we are impatient and inconsiderate; the least provocation makes

¹ *A Christian's Rule of Life* (New York: Catholic Book Pub. Co., 1948), chap. III, n. 7.

us irritable. Basically, this marks the return of the old master of pride and self-will, which was never truly conquered, and which now hides under the appealing guise of zeal for spiritual progress. We are dissatisfied with God, but mostly with ourselves, because our progress is not as rapid as might have been. We would have gladly taken flight into the arms of God and there abide, but we have lost sight of the fact that our spiritual make-up is still very natural, regardless of the assisting encouragement of grace. We are forced to admit that any transformation in the spiritual life is of necessity slow, often too slow to suit our desire, for God is pure spirit and cannot be reached but in a purely spiritual manner. God could have created us angels, but did not, and putting up with the deficiencies of the flesh must be our daily fare, even until we reach the grave. Regardless of its unpleasant attire, this state is not brought about by our own volition. It is going against the grain, and is evidently marked by a sincere desire to reach God. Its main defect is too great a measure of eagerness. We must slow our pace to match the speed of God. Meanwhile we must persevere in the exercises of piety with good grace and patience, until such a time that it pleases God to have mercy on us and show the light of His consoling countenance. In this state there is little to fear but faintheartedness, because those who are sincere in their desire to please God are like the pupil of His eye. God will not refuse them a helping hand, nor allow them to go astray.

There is, however, another form of lukewarmness, one which is deliberate, although it may have taken hold of the soul so gradually that the point of departure from God

cannot be determined with any degree of exactitude. Most probably it began with little infidelities to grace: refusing God the small niceties of love, such as a word of censure withheld, a gaze repressed, a useless thought replaced by the loving remembrance of God. The devil has been awaiting this moment with patience, which centuries of experience have taught him will pay off in dividends. As soon as the thought of God is no longer sufficient to fill the soul completely, other thoughts must refill the place left vacant. Distracting thoughts at prayer are not as yet bidden a ready welcome, but they become less repugnant. Meanwhile, the repeated effort to eject them waxes into a constant source of annoyance. Before long they are tolerated as a matter of course, and finally accepted wilfully. The same process of disintegration affects the other spiritual exercises. Spiritual reading, if such was our laudable custom, is shortened substantially and soon suppressed entirely. Examination of conscience becomes a boor and a burden, more so because we are well aware that all is not well. We dread to be placed face to face with our spiritual deficiencies which are no longer the result of inadvertence. The suspicion grows that we are insincere with God, as in reality we are, and that this insincerity is already of some standing. Stripped of its essential element of candor, examination of conscience is of little use and doomed to be discarded in time.

At this point, nature becomes ever more exacting. Cupiscence resumes its destructive work. With the greater degree of liberty accorded, it becomes bold and daring. Unwholesome suggestions of curiosity run rampant. The distinction between curiosity and sensuality is no longer

clearly drawn. Imprudences are indulged in, and dangers courted. Venial sins cease to be regarded with apprehension, although we still desire to stop short of mortal sin. This is an illusion which soon leads to fatal consequences. If only the actual fall into mortal sin would open our eyes, but by now our conscience has become untrue, and sins, grave in themselves, are considered slight. Pride is bound to aggravate our sorrowful condition. Where there are sins of sensuality, there are sins of pride. The two vices interlock as if one were a punishment for the other, as well may be, since "God resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble" (Jas. 4:6). Avarice follows in the wake of these two disorders, for in the house of crooked mirrors—which conscience has now become—the difference between mine and thine seems insignificant indeed.

The entire work of sanctification, which God so lovingly began, has been disrupted. There continues an open profession of spiritual principles and an exterior practice of God's service. But this is little more than appearance. The heart and soul of spirituality has been eaten away, as the worm eats the inside of the fruit and leaves the outside untouched. And all this is deliberate, for it is done with knowledge: the double knowledge of God and of evil. A withering denunciation of this condition is registered in Sacred Scripture in no uncertain terms. "I know thy works; thou art neither cold nor hot, I would that thou wert cold or hot. But because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to vomit thee out of My mouth" (Apoc. 3:15-16). Why this divine disgust, which causes God to use such severe and damnable language? Father Faber attempts an answer.

Because, he says, it is a quiet and intentional appreciation of other things over God. It cheapens God, and parts with Him second-hand. It pretends friendship and takes rank in the world as one of God's friends. Hence, it involves the twofold guilt of treachery and hypocrisy. As the kiss of Judas, it takes a liberty with the majesty of God's exceeding goodness; it is dishonesty in the vilest sense of the word.²

There is nothing more degrading than to sell a friend—although the barterer gets the worse of the bargain, as did Judas who sold his Master.

Still as of old, men by themselves are priced.
For thirty pieces, Judas sold himself, not Christ.

Deliberate lukewarmness not only degenerates man, but it also drains the energy of the will. It generates a lasting horror of effort, and stops spiritual growth effectively. It is a species of torpor which, though not death as yet, insensibly leads to it through a gradual weakening of all moral powers. One may compare it with any of those slow-working diseases which little by little prey on some vital organ. Gone are those teeming years, when we first commenced to travel the road to perfection. With youthful enthusiasm, we were filled with fervor, ready to carry the cross, even if it meant climbing Calvary. We were prepared to do small things in a grand way, because we well understood—even at this early stage—that sanctity is found in the perfection of little things. Everything was important, for in our eyes there was only good and bad, like black

² *Growth in Holiness* (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1950), chap. XXV.

and white, for which reason rather insignificant things assumed large proportions. Wanting to do things right, we watched our intention very closely, because in the service of God it is not so much what we do, but why we do it. Neither did we lose sight of the fact that a supernatural aim can sanctify even the most ordinary actions.

Just the same, somewhere along the line we blundered into a mistake. Were we thinking of the good we accomplished rather than of the things we left undone? Did we enjoy the past, rather than look forward to the future? Did we love to look at people below us in spiritual accomplishment, rather than at those who had advanced far beyond our efforts? This is the way lukewarmness often attacks religious. Such are forever calculating the sacrifices they made, and the immense good they do to others. To these, St. Paul should have sounded a warning when he said: "I press onward to the goal, to the prize of God's heavenly call in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:14). Or was there an overwhelming amount of human activity in our effort to reach God, as is not seldom the case with those who read the lives of the saints, and forthwith set out to follow them in detail? If we pursued such pattern, we were making a fundamental mistake, that of trying to pour our spirituality into a pre-existing mold. The spiritual formation of each one of us is a highly individual matter. No two leaves show exactly the same formation; nor are two human fingerprints identically alike. The law of variety which governs nature to the extent that nature never repeats itself, is reflected also in the supernatural order. To imitate a saint does not necessarily mean to copy his detailed plan, but rather to follow the leading principle which guided

him to sanctity. This guiding principle in the life of every saint is the love of God which, in the final analysis, is the one essential factor in the process of sanctification. Details, which may and do vary in every given instance, must be left entirely to God's choice. Thus, in selecting the spirituality of someone else, we added another and most common error, the one of making our own selection. We should not have forgotten, but did, that the work of our personal sanctification, being in the highest degree a supernatural process, must remain God's work. It only exacts our cooperation in the act of self-surrender as a necessary condition. This leaves God a free hand as both the originator of the plan and the supervisor and executor by grace of the smallest detail in working out the plan. The mistake of taking this work into our own hands will not fail to show its paralyzing effect. God cannot allow us to usurp His place, least of all when it concerns a matter so explicitly His own. When we nevertheless insist on doing our own planning for the erection of our spiritual edifice, we soon shall witness the futility of our effort. As a natural result, we become dissatisfied with God, while we should have become dissatisfied with our meddling. Soon we drift into a state of apathy, which renders any further progress impossible and, adding stubbornness to folly, we settle for mediocrity as the only sensible solution of our problem. Henceforth we shall be patient, when we have nothing to suffer; gentle, when we are uncontradicted; humble, when people leave our honor untouched. As a matter of fact, we shall still do many things, but not the one thing necessary, namely, to surrender completely to God and to His all-holy will and direction.

While we thus find ourselves unable to determine upon the precise cause of lukewarmness, at least in individual instances, we again turn to St. Alphonsus, who reduces all causes to one. "There is true lukewarmness to be mourned over," says the Saint, "when the soul falls into venial sin with a full will, and grieves but little for such transgressions, and takes no care to avoid them, asserting that they are trifles of no moment."³ For all practical purposes, this teaching of the holy Doctor may well become indelibly imprinted in our minds. Venial sin is at once the cause and the result of tepidity. This is in full accord with the doctrine of Holy Scripture, which states that "he who contemns small things, shall fall little by little" (*Eccl.* 19:1). From the point of perfection there is a distinction to be made between venial sins of surprise and those committed with full deliberation. While the former are readily atoned for and forgiven, the latter stand between us and God as a definite obstacle, and easily prevent the soul from reaching even the lowest degree of perfection. Deliberate venial sin is an evil second only to mortal sin. It is a moral disorder which, although not directly and intrinsically impairing habitual charity, nevertheless indirectly injures this virtue by weakening its habitual fervor. The evil inclinations engendered by repeated venial sin will make the exercise of love for God more difficult, if not impossible, deserve as punishment the withholding of certain actual graces, and predispose man for mortal sin. While it does not actually rob him of God's friendship, it is a flagrant act of ingratitude. Overwhelmed as we are by God's favors, we begrudge God's right to undivided love. St. Teresa pointedly describes

³ *A Christian's Rule of Life*, part I, meditation LXXXV.

its selfishness, when she says: "It is as if we say to God, 'Lord, I know full well that this action displeases You, but I shall do it none the less. I know perfectly well that You do not want it, but I will rather follow my own bent and fancy than Your will!'"⁴ While the Council of Trent condemns those who claim that we can persevere in grace without special help of God,⁵ St. Alphonsus maintains that this help will be justly denied to those who make no account of deliberate venial sin. "Miserable is that soul that is in peace with sin, even if it be only venial sin. Ever gaining strength on him, his passions will blind his conscience. And when a man is blind, who will prevent him from falling down the precipice?"⁶ St. Teresa never committed a mortal sin, as the bull of her canonization attests. Yet it was revealed to her that a place was prepared for her in hell, unless she shook off her lukewarmness. Since mortal sin is punished in hell, we must conclude that her tepidity would have led her away from God eternally, had she not received the grace to return to God in time. Small things are no longer small when they have such effects, and have them as a necessary consequence. By continual withdrawal from God, the sinner forces God to withdraw from him. Such is but a matter of simple necessity on God's part, given the absolute freedom which man enjoys.

Perfection, in final instance, is not a matter of choice. While we distinguish between Christian and evangelical perfection, we realize that a general obligation of striving after perfection is incumbent upon all. Religious have made

⁴ *Way of Perfection*, chap. XLI.

⁵ Sess. VI, can. 23.

⁶ *A Christian's Rule of Life*, part I, meditation XLIII.

this purpose their principal aim and life-objective. In order to reach at least a relative perfection, they have engaged themselves by vow to observe the evangelical counsels in addition to those things that are of precept. They cannot now disengage themselves from an obligation which they freely accepted on the day of their religious profession, for they would deny the very essence of the religious state. A condition of lukewarmness in them is therefore even more deplorable than in the common Christian, since God will not surrender His rights. Nor can anyone play fast and loose with counsels, without the possible forfeiture of grace to keep precepts.

Spiritual writers are much concerned about this curse of lukewarmness. Some of them, among them Father Faber, fear that it is very common and that, at this very moment, it is gnawing away the life out of several souls who suspect not its presence there. But he refuses to accept it as an incurable ailment. In many instances it may take a miracle of grace to convince the person that he is lukewarm. But once this frightening discovery is made, there is hope of even a miraculous cure. The person, however, must act immediately and with vigor, for to accept this condition as final is like going to sleep in the snow.⁷

After we have established that fervor is the normal state for all, we are not mildly surprised to find that, by a curious anomaly, it is repeatedly considered to be the privilege of beginners in the spiritual life, rather than of proficients. Who has not heard the zeal and enthusiasm of youthful clerics and religious ridiculed and scoffed at by elderly companions as something entirely too visionary and quite

⁷ *Growth in Holiness*, chap. XXV.

impracticable? "It is all very well to hitch your wagon to a star, but before long you will learn to keep your feet on the ground." Older religious not seldom speak about first fervor as something they had, or should have had, much like children have the measles—nothing much to worry about, because of its passing nature. Yet fervor is a tried state, and its essence consists in its permanence. It is the virtue which stands for perseverance, the one which generates courage together with a great distrust of self because of the deep knowledge it gives of the nature of divine grace. Thus one will keep up the fight when, by the law of averages, the odds are against victory, because it is endowed with power from on high. The greatest advantage derived from this tried state of fervor is the practice of living in the continual presence of God. As a spiritual exercise, this practice begins with the frequent thought of God. It soon develops into a veritable necessity to converse with Him, to consult Him, and to ask for much needed help. We grow in confidence and love; and greater love and confidence give a deeper knowledge of God and of the things which concern God. Under the gaze of His loving eye, our hearts are flooded with interior peace. We come to realize that, by means of grace, ours are already the essential delights of heaven in the true possession of God, and between our joy and the joy of the elect there remains only a relative difference of degree. In all this, we are guided by the indispensable gifts of piety and the fear of the Lord. Servile fear is raised to the level of reverential deference. It is of this latter and most desirable state that Sacred Scripture speaks, when it declares that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Ps. 110:10). This

reverential attitude implies a filial respect for God and His rights, a sincere sorrow for past transgressions, and a great longing to stay with God in the future. This longing to remain close to God is perhaps the most important factor in a person's quest of perfection. It is inspired by love, and expresses itself in an ever growing detachment from anything which as much as resembles sin. In fact, it is divine charity in a very high degree. It at once sanctifies our most ordinary actions and lifts them to the level of God. At the same time, it enhances the value of all our meritorious acts and gives them the additional beauty of this virtue. This life of charity, being an immediate participation in the life of God, is full of sanctifying power, since it is modeled upon the uncreated love of God. To be governed by this exalted principle is to be living the fullest life of grace. "If thy eye be sound, thy whole body will be full of light" (Matt. 6:22). It is the intention by which an action stands or falls, and only a pure intention can make an action fully acceptable in the eyes of God. We may divine the presence of a pure intention when the outcome of our effort does not disturb our peace of mind. Success is not necessarily included in God's plans. Only the amount of sincerity we put into the action, regardless of its outcome, is valued by God. Nor do we consider the matter of praise or gratitude. Human judgment is fallible, and neither one can affect the intrinsic worth of our action. Fervent souls often make a higher degree of happiness in heaven the object of their aim and intention. As a working principle it cannot be underestimated, more so when this desire coincides with a corresponding design to give greater glory to God. Yet the most perfect intention considers God alone,

as St. John Chrysostom remarks: "If we are judged worthy of doing anything that pleases God, what other reward do we desire than the knowledge that we have attained to the fulfillment of God's good pleasure."⁸ The intensity of purpose to please God in all our actions takes concrete form in the morning offering. The thought of God's presence will urge us to renew this intention at stated intervals, at least at the beginning of each new and important action, as did the holy hermit mentioned by St. Alphonsus, "who lifted his eyes to heaven and remained still for a moment to make sure of his aim."⁹ The fervor and intensity of our actions depend much on our cooperation with the actual graces which God places at our disposal. If used well, they work like the chain-action of atomic power, every action being productive of new energy. These actual graces are never wanting, but their measure is in direct proportion to our eagerness to use them. "For to everyone who has shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he seems to have shall be taken away" (Matt. 25:29).

When we return to the present petition, we notice that our Lord, who commanded us to have recourse to Him in the day of tribulation, has also prescribed a certain order to be observed in all our prayers. Before asking to be delivered from evil, He would have us beg that His name be sanctified, His kingdom established, and so on until we reach the last petition. With this our Lord indicates that, whatever be our needs, God's honor and glory must precede all our other concern; most of all, God's holy will

⁸ *De Compunctione*, 1.2.

⁹ *A Christian's Rule of Life*, chap. III, no. 6.

in our respect is forever adorable and deserves priority over any and all of our own considerations. In conclusion, we are reminded of the efficacy of each individual petition as an ejaculatory prayer. The advantage of short ejaculations is well known to those who cherish close and intimate converse with God. Here we have as many ejaculations as we have petitions, each one having the unction and power of divine inspiration.

A few final remarks remain to be made about the word *Amen*, the conclusion of our prayer. *Amen* is one of the small number of Hebrew words that have been incorporated into the liturgy of the Church. In this respect, the Catechism of the Council remarks that this word was so often in the mouth of the Savior that it pleased the Holy Spirit to have it perpetuated in the Church.¹⁰ It is a derivative of the Hebrew verb *Aman*, which means to strengthen or to confirm. In Sacred Scripture it appears almost invariably as an adverb, in its primary use indicating that the speaker adopts as his own what has been said by another. In second instance, it is used as an affirmation or confirmation, as the case may be, of the speaker's own thoughts, by either introducing or following them. The common practice of concluding a discourse, or chapter of a subject, with a doxology seem to have led to a third distinctive use of the word. In this case it has the force of a formula of conclusion, which marks the end. A fourth and specific meaning is advocated by the Catechism in reference to the Lord's Prayer. Here it would have the force of a response given by God to the preceding part of the prayer. The following argument is put forth in support of this assumption.

¹⁰ *Catechism of the Council of Trent for Parish Priests.*

"When reciting the Lord's Prayer during Mass, the Church does not put the *Amen* in the mouth of the server, who is directed to say 'but deliver us from evil.' Instead, it is reserved to the priest who, as mediator between God and man, intimates in this manner that the Lord has heard the prayer of His people." The Catechism rests its case on the words of St. Paul, "All the promises of God find their 'Yes' in Him; and therefore through Him also rises the *Amen* to God unto His glory" (2 Cor. 1:20). Whether we fully agree with this opinion or not, the fact remains that the *Our Father* has the special unction of a divine prayer, to which we may apply at all times the promise of our Lord: "If you abide in Me, and if My words abide in you, ask whatever you will and it shall be done to you" (John 15:7).

Hail Mary

BEFORE we round off the preceding chapters with a short explanation of the Hail Mary, a few historical notes are in order. Consisting of three parts, the Hail Mary is a composition of the words spoken by the Angel Gabriel, words spoken by St. Elizabeth, and a concluding prayer added by the Church. For many centuries the Hail Mary was restricted to its first part, whence it derives its name of Angelical Salutation. Ever since the veneration of the Mother of Christ began to take shape in Apostolic times, this salutation has been on the lips of every Christian in one form or another, but as an accepted formula of Catholic devotion it probably dates back to the early twelfth century, when it was used in versicles and responsories of the Little Office of the Blessed Mother. The same century found it also widely prevalent as a form of private devotion, although it is not certain when the second part, containing the words of Mary's cousin, were added. We have a treatise on the *Ave Maria* from the hand of Abbot Baldwin, written shortly before 1184, in which this second part is mentioned. "To this salutation of the Angel, by which we daily greet the most Blessed Virgin, with such devotion as we may,

we are accustomed to add the words, ‘and blessed is the fruit of thy womb,’ by which clause Elizabeth completed the words of the Angel, saying, ‘Blessed art thou amongst women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.’”

The addition of the word “Jesus” to the present first half of the Hail Mary, or the conclusion “Jesus Christ, Amen,” as it was found in the fifteenth century, is ascribed to the initiative of Pope Urban IV (1261), and the confirmation and indulgence of John XXII.

A gradual process of development is also observed in the final addition to the Angelical Salutation, which gave it the standing of a formal prayer. The Reformers frequently censured the Catholics because the Hail Mary, which they so constantly repeated, was not a proper prayer formula. It was a salutation, a greeting, which contained no petition. This objection had long been felt by those who recited their *Aves* privately, with the consequence that it was not uncommon during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries to add some clause at the end. Traces of this practice are already extant in the first half of the fourteenth century, where we find a verse paraphrase of the Hail Mary ending with the words: “O Blessed Virgin, pray to God for us always, that He may pardon us and give us grace so to live here below, that He may reward us with paradise at our death.” An indication of the general character of this usage is found in an observation, written for the Bridgettine nuns of Syon, and dating from this period, which reads: “Some say at the beginning of the salutation, ‘Hail, Sweet Jesus,’ and some say after Mary, ‘Mother of God,’ with other additions at the end also. Such things may be said when people recite their *Aves* of their own

devotion. But in the service of the Church, I think, it is safer and more meritorious to obey the common use, as the Church has it, without any such additions." The present version, except for the omission of "our" in "the hour of our death," is found in a little work of Savonarola, issued in 1495, a copy of which is found in the British Museum. The complete and identical text first appears in the Breviary of the Camaldoleses monks, and in that of the Order of Mercy, printed around 1514; it was made official by the Roman Breviary of 1568.

It seems worth our notice that the old custom of treating the Hail Mary explicitly as a salutation and of reciting only the first part still survives in some European countries, notably among the Irish peasants who, after confession, when told to recite the Hail Mary as penance, will inquire whether this includes the Holy Mary. In passing we may mention the quaint custom of the three favored children of Fatima who, before the apparition, reduced the Angelical Salutation to its barest essentials by saying *Ave Maria*, without any further addition.¹

When we now take up the formula in common use, we observe that the first part contains a repetition of the words spoken by the Archangel Gabriel at the Annunciation: "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women" (Luke 1:28). This was a salutation altogether new and never heard before, a greeting, as the Fathers remark, which was placed on the Angel's lips to honor the Blessed Virgin in a manner which would show forth the sublime dignity to which she was being raised, a salutation which was as obscure as the mystery of the

¹ *Catholic Encyclopedia*, VII, 110-12.

Incarnation of the Son of God, which was about to be accomplished in her womb. The Angel had not addressed her in the usual way and by her proper name, but rather using a surname, "full of grace." It is evident that this address was fully indicative of Mary's singular position in God's creation, fully descriptive of her relations with God in the realm of grace. The Angel was not praising Mary, but simply stating a fact. Thus "full of grace" is Mary's proper name, much in the same way as Eve was called "mother of all the living" (Gen. 3:20), or as our Lord was called Christ, the Anointed. It is plain to us that Mary had indeed received a veritable abundance of grace, which may well be called fullness of grace. If she was to become the Sanctuary of the Most High, in the most literal sense of the word, and harbor within her blessed womb the King of the Universe, she had to receive graces in proportion, graces which as closely as possible resembled the graces which our Lord Himself received in His human nature. His was an absolute fullness of grace, commensurate with His mission as the Savior of mankind, the inexhaustible source of all the graces which all men have received since the fall of Adam, or will receive till the end of time. Mary's grace was one of superabundance, which first prepared her for her unique vocation, and then would overflow unto mankind with a plenitude of redundancy beyond measure and degree, joining up with the very graces of her divine Son to actually flood the universe. All this is evident to us, but it was not to our Blessed Lady at the moment that the Angel appeared to her in her humble abode. Obviously, her converse with God was of a very intimate nature. In her was found no inclination to evil,

no general deformity of mind and will, but rather a superlative degree of infused knowledge of God and of the things concerning God. Because of this, she enjoyed an extraordinary union with God in mutual understanding and almost perfect love, but, by the glory of her humility, Mary did not know that her case was exceptional to the extent that it was not paralleled by any other human being, nor ever would be. Nor had she as yet realized that this grace had been with her from the first moment of her conception, with the result that she had never been separated from God, as is every other child born of a woman. No wonder that Mary was troubled in her mind at the Angel's word, and kept pondering what manner of greeting this might be (Luke 1:29).

And the Angel said to her,

Do not be afraid, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God. And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb and shalt bring forth a son; and thou shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he shall be king over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end (Luke 1:30-33).

Mary was undoubtedly endowed with a most brilliant mind, more so because her intellectual judgment had never been impaired by sin, either original or actual. Like ours, this knowledge of our Lady was aided and guided by faith and divine grace. Since she had received a fullness of grace, her faith must have been assisted by the gifts of the Holy Spirit in such a manner that she could read into the hidden meaning of revealed mysteries far deeper than

could even the most learned and pious Jewish scholar. She was well aware that the Messiah was to be born of a virgin, and that in a miraculous manner. The prophecy was so very clear. "The Lord Himself shall give you a sign," Isaias had said to King Achaz. "Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and his name shall be Emmanuel" (Is. 7:14). That the strength of this prophecy is found in the virgin who shall conceive and bear a son, is evident from the context. There would be no question of a sign or miracle, unless these words point to a virginal conception and a miraculous birth. Was the Angel indeed speaking of the promised Messiah? Or did he refer to an eminently prominent and earthly king, who would govern, in his seed, the Chosen People until the end of time? Remembering her decided purpose to remain a virgin forever, while not desiring to go against the words of Gabriel, which were evidently God's own, she inquired cautiously how this should happen, since she did not know man.

And the Angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee; and therefore the Holy One to be born shall be called the Son of God. And behold, Elizabeth thy kinswoman also has conceived a son in her old age, and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month; for nothing shall be impossible with God" (Luke 1:35-36).

Now all doubts concerning her selection as the mother of the Messiah being fully removed, and reassured about her virginity, Mary spoke her immortal words, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word" (Luke 1:38). It was at this moment that the Eternal

Word of God came down into her womb: and the Word was made flesh to dwell among us.

Mary had been long preparing for this exuberance of grace which came her way by means of the Incarnation. It began with a remote and moral preparation before conception. As such, it coincided with the general preparation by which all men were to ready themselves for the reception of the grace of redemption. It combined a pious longing for the Redeemer with a sincere desire to do all within one's power to obtain this redeeming grace. On the part of Mary, although unwittingly, it consisted in preparing a worthy dwelling place for the Redeemer within herself, and in the human race. In this operation she was aided by her perfect disposition to do God's will at any event and in every respect. At the same time, by the power of the Holy Spirit working in her, she could worthily obtain from God the sending of the Redeemer, not by way of reward in justice, but as an effect of her prayerful entreaties which were made efficacious by her state of special friendship with God. The Fathers indicate this form of Mary's cooperation when they say that, by her perfect disposition, she made the Son of God descend into her womb. In this respect, St. Bernard remarks: "What wonder that she was full of grace when the Lord was with her. God had been swifter than His messenger, for the Angel sent from above, found God awaiting him at his journey's end."²

In the act of conceiving her Son, Mary cooperated directly and effectively by giving her explicit consent. This consent was not merely given in respect to her maternal activity, characteristic of the mother, in its instrumental

² Migne, *PL*, CLXXXII, Epist. 174.

working of nature. It was a voluntary acceptance of her part in the work of redemption. Since her Son was announced to her as the Redeemer of the world, her consent was formally given in order to make the redemption possible. Such is the way the Fathers explain it. They maintain that Mary's consent was an eminently moral act, which implies objectively and directly a true dependence of the work of redemption on her will. Mary's free consent, in its contrast with Eve's disobedience, brings out the similarity of means used in the redemption of mankind. In this connection St. Justin remarks:

The Son of God became man that He might undo the disobedience, caused by the serpent, in the same way as it began. For Eve accepted the word of the devil, and brought forth death and disobedience. But the Virgin Mary, filled with faith and joy, answered the Archangel Gabriel's tidings: "Be it done to me according to thy word."³

To this St. Irenaeus adds:

The knot of Eve's disobedience was loosened by Mary's obedience. If Eve disobeyed God, Mary was persuaded to obey Him, so that the Virgin Mary should become the advocate of Eve. As the human race is made subject to death by Eve, so it is saved by Mary. The scale is put to an equal balance, that is, disobedience is offset by obedience.⁴

Since this dependence was willed and arranged for by God Himself, it was such that in no way God's plan of redemption was exposed to the danger of frustration. Together

³ Migne, PG, VI, 709.

⁴ Ibid., VII, 959.

with that eternal decree, God provided also the assurance of Mary's consent.

The honor of sharing effectively in the work of our Lord's redemption has provided our Lady with the title of Second Eve. This title was universally accepted as early as the second century, and the Fathers who taught it did not regard it as a fruit of personal speculation, but rather as the traditional doctrine of the Church. It is supported by the words of St. Paul, who describes our Lord as the Second Adam and the Author of salvation. "As from the offense of the one man the result was unto condemnation to all men, so from the justice of the One the result is unto justification of life to all men" (Rom. 5:18). In order to establish Mary as the Second Eve, the Fathers explained St. Paul's text in direct connection with the first and fundamental promise of the Redeemer, given by God in the protogospel: "I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel" (Gen. 3:15). Their reasoning followed a uniform pattern. The redemption, as an antidote to the cunning of the devil, was to take a course which would answer to that of the fall. The latter was brought about by the devil with the help of a man and a woman. Hence Satan had to be defeated, not by the New Adam alone, but with the cooperation of the New Eve. Both sexes had their share in effecting the fall. Both sexes were to be represented in bringing about the restoration. If this had not been God's intention, the indication of a woman in the enmities announced to the devil would have been void of meaning. In this connection we give a relevant quotation of Pius IX, who says:

With the words "I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed," God in His very first announcement to the world gave the sovereign remedy which His divine mercy had prepared for the renewal of the human race. The Fathers teach us that this divine announcement clearly and distinctly points to the merciful Redeemer of the human race in the person of the only-begotten Son of God, Jesus Christ; and designates the most Blessed Virgin Mary as His Mother. It expresses very notably the enmities of both against the devil. Wherefore Christ, the Mediator between God and man, upon assuming our human nature erases the handwriting of the decree which was against us, and fastens it as conqueror against the Cross. Likewise, bound to Him by the closest and most indissoluble bond, the most holy Virgin carries into effect, together with Him and by Him, the perpetual enmities against the poisonous serpent, and crushes it by her immaculate foot.⁵

The words of St. Augustine are even more explicit.

It is a great sign that, as death came to us by a woman, life was born to us by a woman, so that in both sexes, feminine and masculine, the devil might be tormented in complete defeat. He would not have been punished adequately if both had not cooperated to effect the liberation. Because man fell through the female sex, he is restored by the same sex. By a woman came death; by a woman, life.⁶

St. Jerome furnishes the classical expression: "Death by Eve; life by Mary."⁷

⁵ Encyclical *Ineffabilis Deus*, Dec. 8, 1854.

⁶ Migne, *PL*, XV, 303.

⁷ *Ibid.*, XXII, 408.

By the title of Second Eve, our Lady's further cooperation in the work of redemption is also fairly emphasized. Ever since the prophet Simeon acquainted Mary with the fact that a sword of grief would pierce her soul, it was brought home to our Lady that this Child, who was destined for the fall and the rise of many in Israel, could not save the world without blood. Says St. Pius X: "Mary accepted the mission of protecting and nourishing the Lamb of sacrifice and, when the time came, led Him to the altar of immolation."⁸ Beneath the cross, Mary's cooperation assumed its highest form and reached its true completion. By offering her Son to the Father as a sacrifice of propitiation for the sins of the world, her cooperation was again actual and personal. In this respect an anonymous author of the twelfth century remarks: "There was one will and one sacrifice in Mother and Son: the one in the blood of Mary's heart, the other in the blood of our Lord's body."⁹ Says Arnold of Chartres: "Whoever had been on Mount Calvary to witness the great sacrifice of the Immaculate Lamb, would have beheld two altars, the one in the body of Jesus, the other in the heart of Mary. For on that mount, when the Son sacrificed His body to death, Mary sacrificed her soul by compassion."¹⁰ Although Mary's offering did not add to the intrinsic power of the redeeming sacrifice of her Son, it cannot for that reason be considered purely ornamental and accidental. According to God's eternal decree, Mary's sacrifice added something to the substantial integrity of her Son's, inasmuch as our Lord

⁸ Encyclical *Ad Diem Illum*, Feb. 2, 1904.

⁹ Migne, *PL*, CLXXXIX, 1726.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, CLXXXIX, 1694.

desired as little to act apart from and without her, as she can act apart from and without Him. For this reason, and in this sense, the effects of our Lord's sacrifice are regarded as conjointly obtained by Jesus and Mary, and we may say that by her cooperation with Christ, she gave satisfaction to God for sin, merited grace, and redeemed the world, always in and through Jesus Christ. In this manner we may also consider Mary as a contributing cause to the fruits of the redemption, as St. Cyril of Alexandria says so beautifully:

Hail Mary, Mother of God, who art to be venerated as the treasure of the whole world. By whom the Blessed Trinity is adored and glorified, the redeeming Cross is venerated; by whom the angels and archangels rejoice, the devils take to flight, the diabolical tempter falls from heaven; by whom the fallen are taken up; by whom every human creature is brought to the knowledge of the truth; by whom holy baptism and the oil of exultation reach the faithful; by whom churches are established the world over; by whom nations are brought to penance; by whom the only-begotten Son of God for ages past has enlightened those who were sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death.¹¹

Because of her continued cooperation in distributing the fruits of the redemption, Mary is generally honored and proclaimed as the *Mediatrix of All Graces*. Although not dogmatically established, this doctrine is theologically certain. It has been a part of the Church's teaching for many centuries and has been confirmed by several Supreme Pon-

¹¹ *Ibid.*, LXXVII, 992.

tiffs. Bossuet summarizes the doctrine in his sermon on the compassion of our Lady, where he says:

O Most Blessed Virgin Mary, you have in your hands the key that opens the treasures of divine blessings. The key is your Son. He closes, and no one can open. He opens, and no one can close. It is His innocent blood which causes us to be inundated with heavenly graces. To whom will He give the right to that blood, if not to her from whom He drew it?¹²

This traditional doctrine, thus formulated by Bossuet, was proclaimed by Leo XIII in his first encyclical on the Rosary, in which he calls Mary "the dispenser of heavenly graces." In a following encyclical letter on the same subject, he makes the absolute claim that "no grace is given to us except through Mary, such being the divine will."¹³ He makes his own the words of St. Bernard and calls Mary our Mediatrix, concluding with the famous words that "no one can come to the Father except by the Son, in much the same manner as no one can come to the Son, except by Mary." St. Pius X calls Mary "the Dispensatrix of all the graces which Jesus acquired for us by His blood."¹⁴ Benedict XV gave the doctrine official sanction when he instituted the feast of "Our Lady, Mediatrix of All Graces," and allowed its observance, to those who requested it, on May 31.¹⁵ By decree of October 11, 1954, Pope Pius XII combined this observance with the feast of Mary, Queen of

¹² Serm. 3 *sur la conception*; see also, Serm. 4 *sur l'annonciation*.

¹³ Encyclical *Octobri mense*, Sept. 22, 1891.

¹⁴ Denzinger, *Enchiridion*, p. 3033.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 3034.

the Universe, and prescribed that on the aforesaid day, the consecration of the human race to the Immaculate Heart of Mary be recited and renewed. Since both feasts are based on Mary's divine maternity and her cooperation in the Redemption, the celebration of Mary's Universal Queenship, under the title of "Our Lady Queen of Heaven and Mistress of the World," gives the present doctrine its crowning sanction. Once again the words of Bossuet are apropos.

God having once willed to give Jesus Christ to us by the Blessed Virgin, and the gifts of God being without repentance, this order never changes. It is and will ever be true that, having received through her charity which is the universal principle of all grace, it is still through her that we receive the divers applications of grace in all the different states which compose the Christian life. Her maternal love having contributed so much to our salvation in the mystery of the Incarnation, she will eternally contribute to it in all the operations which are entirely dependent on this mystery.¹⁶

In view of the general approval of the ordinary teaching power of the Church, the consensus of theologians, and the final approbation of the liturgy, it seems that this doctrine of Mary's universal mediation can be defined as a dogma of faith. It is at least implicitly revealed in the several titles which tradition bestows on Mary—inclusive of this new title of Mistress of the World—and may be used safely for devotional purposes.

When we now turn to the second part of the Hail Mary,

¹⁶ Ser. 3 sur la conception.

we notice that the concluding words of Gabriel, *Blessed art thou among women*, were repeated by Elizabeth. This eulogy, in the mouth of the Angel, is based on a comparison between Mary and other women, and indicated in a compendious manner all the privileges received by our Lady. Mary was privileged, distinguished, and elevated above every other creature, not only with regard to the wonders which the Lord has wrought in her before the annunciation, but also with regard to those wonderful things which before long He was to accomplish in her. Mary then was blessed among women, because of all women she was full of grace; because of all women she was characteristically protected and assisted by God from the very first moment of her own conception; but especially blessed, because of all women she alone was to become the mother of Him in whom all nations of the earth were to be blessed.

In the mouth of Elizabeth, the words assume a slightly more concentrated significance. "Blessed art thou among women," Elizabeth remarked, "and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And how have I deserved that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?" (Luke 1:43-44). Unacquainted with Mary's numerous privileges, Elizabeth could only concentrate on the central point of Mary's dignity as Mother of God. When God manifested His presence to Moses by means of a bush that was on fire and was not burnt, and told him to take off his shoes, for the ground on which he stood was holy (Ex. 3:5), who would dare to draw near in the presence of her who was foreshadowed by the burning bush, who conceived God within her womb and was not consumed? To understand our Lady's exalted

position, as Elizabeth did, inspired by the Holy Spirit, one must ponder it in its exalted cause. Here was substantially present whom the heavens and the world cannot contain, the God of the universe, a glimpse of whose glory would appear on earth at some future moment when He was transfigured before Peter, James, and John, "and His face shone as the sun, and His garments became white as snow . . . and a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'" (Matt. 17:1 ff). The same whom St. John saw in Apocalyptic vision, surrounded by a throng of thousands of thousands of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, and a voice of many angels, saying: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and divinity and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing" (Apoc. 5:12). The One who had been begotten from all eternity in the bosom of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from the true God. One with the Father and the Holy Spirit, consubstantial with them in essence and nature, in whom dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily and upon whose face one cannot gaze and live (Ex. 33:20). As the quotation has it, Elizabeth is said to have repeated the last part of the Angelical Salutation. As a matter of record, some notable manuscripts omit these words in the latter and attribute them to Mary's cousin only. Whatever be the case, the basic meaning of the words do not change: Mary is blessed among women, for blessed is the fruit of her womb. Before as well as after the Incarnation, the whole of Mary's glory is contained in the mystery of her Son. As St. Thomas of

Villanova aptly remarks: "What more praise can we give Mary than to say, 'of her was born Jesus who is called Christ'" (Matt. 1:16).

To the present eulogy the Church has added the word *Jesus*, in order to indicate that the Son of Mary is the true Savior of the world, according to the words spoken to Joseph by the Angel: "And thou shalt call His name Jesus; for He shall save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21). Neither is there salvation in any other name. "For there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

The third and concluding part of the Hail Mary is in the form of a petition, composed and added by the Church to make it a true prayer. The Church thus teaches us to begin with praise and finish with prayer. In substance, the third part takes up the last words spoken by Elizabeth, and continues on the same note. The mystery of the divine maternity by which our Lady contracted consanguinity with the Word made flesh, and affinity with the adorable Trinity, constitutes our one and continued claim on her intercession. For if Mary is the Mother of God, what doubt can we have that her power of intercession before the throne of her Son borders on the divine omnipotence itself, not indeed with an omnipotence of justice, but with one of mercy and grace. She is the only creature to whom God acknowledges Himself a debtor. Says St. Alphonsus: "Because of the temporal life which He had not before and which He received from Mary when He clothed Himself with our flesh in her womb, and for the maternal care He subsequently received from her, He is in some

way indebted to her, as a son is indebted to his mother."¹⁷ At the same time, the Church makes us approach Mary with emphasis on our condition as sinners, not just as a humble confession of our miseries in order to excite her compassion and mercy, but more especially because this condition was, if not the cause, at least the very occasion of her dignity. If the world had contained no sinners standing in need of redemption, there would have been no necessity for the Word of God to become man. And if the Word had not been made flesh, we would not have Mary as the Mother of God, for this privilege has no foundation other than the Incarnation of the Word of God. Thus we pray with the Church: *Pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death.* Mary, in obtaining the grace of becoming the Mother of Jesus, also received what Abbot Marmion calls the special grace of maternity toward Christ's mystical body. The universal practice of the Church to repeat the present petition has been accepted by many theologians as an additional proof of the doctrine of mediation. For in Mary's womb Christ wedded the human race and became one body with it, which was indeed the necessary condition to restore humanity to its original justice and favor with God. Christ is given to the world by Mary. In fact, the miraculous conception and birth of Christ from the womb of the Virgin is the model and the basis of the future spiritual conception and birth of Christ in the Church.

Because of all this, we hold that our Lady, while giving her consent to the Incarnation, accepted a threefold office

¹⁷ *The Glories of Mary* (Esopus, N. Y.: The Redemptorist Fathers, 1931), chap. V.

as mother of God's Son, mother of His redeeming work, and mother of the human race. One who fathoms the depth of these relations, has fathomed the depth of God's wisdom and love, and the means used by God to redeem mankind. We love our Lady so dearly because of these prerogatives, for which reason also the *Hail Mary* has become our most beloved prayer, next to the *Our Father*. We have combined these prayers from early childhood, and shall continue to do so until the hour of death. Thus the habitual use of the *Our Father* and the *Hail Mary* is our mainstay in life and a guarantee of salvation. They have become the very guardian of Christian life and our pledge of sanctification, for true prayer is a mode of life, and the truest life is forever a prayer.

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